Negotiating Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa:

Black African Managers' Experiences

in an English-speaking University

By

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

This is a study about the subjective experiences of black African managers working in an English-speaking university in post-apartheid South Africa. We investigated the adaptation strategies they employ as they navigate borders and boundaries between their home and work worlds, and how they negotiate identity in an environment dominated by Eurocentrism in one of the oldest English-speaking universities in South Africa. The theoretical framework was informed Berger & Luckmann's (1966) "Social Construction of Reality", in particular, their concepts of subjectivity and intersubjectivity; and Phelan, Davidson and Yu's (1993 & 1998) "Multiple Worlds Typology". The theories proposed by these writers acknowledge that individuals move between multiple worlds as they go about their daily lives. We adopted a typology from Phelan *et al.* (1993 & 1996) based on whether or not the "worlds" are congruent and what adaptation strategies individuals use in their transitions across borders and boundaries. We used a qualitative approach which involved face to face in-depth interviews with six black African managers using a semi-structured interview schedule. This, importantly, meant we allowed the respondents' subjective voices to emerge. The six respondents fell across four out of six types of transitions and we were able to construct their profiles which represent identity clusters showing how different individuals deal with common experiences and the variety of strategies they employ. The four types were Congruent Worlds/Smooth Transitions, Different Worlds/Border-crossings Managed, Different Worlds/Border-crossings Difficult, and Different Worlds/Borders Resisted. The strategies for negotiating identity in the workplace included conforming to the institutional culture, integrating or "plugging in" selected values of the African home culture into that of the company, resisting the dominant culture of the company and leaving the company altogether.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study is about black African managers' experiences working at an English-speaking university in post-apartheid South Africa. We investigate the ways in which they navigate borders (and boundaries), and negotiate identity as they move between home and work.

The social phenomenon of black African managers working in historically white organisations is a fairly recent development in South Africa. Black African occupational advancement in South Africa has a long history characterized by constraints in the form of apartheid policy and legislation. Under apartheid black African people were deliberately excluded from management positions in white businesses until 1980 (Luhabe, 2002:17). Some occupational advancement of Africans into supervisory roles did take place despite the job colour bar because business and industry suffered a shortage of labour. Studies by Crankshaw (1994 and 1996), however, show that although substantial upward mobility of Africans was prohibited during the apartheid era, certain categories of semi-professional and routine white-collar work were filled by Africans. This was particularly evident in the service sector which was expanding.

In the 1970s big business pressurised the National Party government to change the legislation. The captains of business and industry argued that there were insufficient white employees to fill junior management positions. The findings of the government sponsored Wiehahn Commission of inquiry into industrial and labour relations and the associated legislation ushered in a new labour dispensation in 1979. This resulted in changes in the South African industrial laws and labour relations practices.

Discriminatory legislation in the workplace was eventually scrapped. However, in the 1980s many black Africans did not give serious consideration to joining the ranks of white management instead many chose to join the liberation movement. In fact, "The small numbers of black Africans who joined the ranks of white management were viewed by political activists as "sell-outs" (Strümpfer, 1983: 11 and Watts, 1985:108). So while there were some opportunities for black African professionals to move into management relatively few actually did and management remained largely white (and male)" (De Wet, forthcoming).

Crankshaw (1994) and Beall *et al.* (2002) have reported significant African mobility in the 1990s into positions previously reserved for whites, namely semi-professional routine white collar and artisanal occupations, and the professions of teaching and nursing. Yet little change has occurred in middle and upper management positions held by Africans as these have grown by less than 20%, from 13% in 1965, to 30% in the 1990s (Crankshaw, 1996).

"With the advent of democracy in 1994 the ANC government put in place policy and legislative frameworks to change the demographic profile of management across all sectors in society. Progress, however, has been slow." (De Wet, forthcoming). According to Statistics South Africa's 2003 Labour Force Survey black Africans make up 26% of all corporate and general managers in South Africa, while whites make up 57%, coloureds 8% and Indians/Asians 9%. This means that a little less than 4% of black Africans (up to age 65) in full-time employment occupy management positions (broadly defined) in the

formal sector, compared to 26% whites and 6% coloureds, and 20% Indian/Asians (Statistics South Africa, 2003 Labour Force Survey) (De Wet, forthcoming). In spite of the government's efforts and the growing numbers of black professionals, black Africans continue to be a minority in the managerial establishment of historically white organisations.

In 1998 the Employment Equity Act was passed to i.) promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination, and ii.) implement affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment. Pressure on historically white organisations to transform and redress past imbalances has led such organisations to concentrate on getting "the right" number of black people into management (De Wet, forthcoming). Authors such as Madi (1993), Qunta (1995) Human (1996), Charoux (1990) Luhabe (2002) all agree that promoting black Africans into management positions is not just a "numbers game" but an integral part of organisational strategy *apropos* transformation that should take into account the quality of an individual's life at work. Luhabe (2002) argues that at present, however, the playing field is not level, as black managers are excluded from white organisational networks that promote and support whites. Qunta (1995) and Luhabe (2002) argue that organisational issues confronting black managers often prevent them from flourishing. Their battles and victories must be taken into account as organisations hitherto controlled by whites seek to transform.

Over the past three decades numerous studies have dealt with black (African) managers

or professionals. Most, if not all of these studies, have been about black managers in corporate South Africa. There was a flurry of publications in the 1980s (Human, 1982a; Human & Hofmeyr, 1985; Charoux, 1986) which focused on the problem of black African managers as under-performers; how and why they struggled to succeed in white organisations and how the "problem" could be addressed. What emerged from this was various templates into which black African managers were required to fit. Most were in the form of "instruction-manuals" which gave directions for the integrating of black African managers into white organisations. This literature is characterised by two features: black managers are depicted as a homogenous group and the voices of black managers are absent. There are a few exceptions. Watts (1985) and Human (1982) pay attention to the subjective experiences of their respondents. They also drew attention to black managers' experiences of alienation and marginalisation. Human (1982a) cites Park's definition (1928) of "marginal man":

> "A cultural hybrid, a man [sic] living and sharing intimately in the cultural life of two distinct people, never willing to break, even if [he] were permitted to do so, with [his] past and [his] traditions, never quite accepted because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which [he] now sought to find a place."

Watts (1985) argues that the feelings of maladjustment that can arise out of the marginal situation often result in strain and alienation and sometimes, in extreme situations, in the disintegration of identity. Both writers generalise their findings. (1985:82) Writing about black professionals' perceptions, experiences and reactions to stressful work conditions, Watts (1985: 82) acknowledges some diversity when she does not reduce her findings to a single profile in the way Human (1982b) does.

Studies of black African managers are guilty of stereotyping, even in the case where authors like Human (1982a), who have acknowledged the significance of the subjective experience. Evidence of stereotyping is found in the reference to "The black (African) manager" as if all black African managers are the same. A result of typecasting is that problems with particular black African managers' are identified as being applicable to all black Africa managers, so Human & Hofmeyr (1985) and Charoux (1986), offer a standard set of solutions or a standard way of dealing with the issues so as to integrate 'the black (African) manager' into the organization.

According to Watts (1985: 34), studies undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s confirm a negative view of black managers by their white employers as: lacking assertiveness, creativity and innovation; tardy in decision-making; having a low propensity for risk-taking; unable to function autonomously and handle increased responsibility; subservient and lacking interpersonal skills. Watts (1985) writes that early research in the 70s and 80s depicted black (African) professionals as under-performers and proceeded to attribute underperformance largely to cultural differences, lack of education or racism. The theories were that i). Management practices are dominated by an Anglo-American orientation and that black managers have to adjust to this culture. More often than not they fail to successfully do so as the "cultural gap" makes it difficult for them to assimilate into the white business world ii). Black managers were ill prepared for white organisations due to a lack of or an inferior education and iii). Racial obstacles were primary factors preventing black managers from realising their full potential (Watts, 1985; 36).

Qunta (1995) reports that her research shows that black African managers who leave white organisations complain of tokenism and being undermined by their white colleagues. This is often attributed to South Africa's history of racial discrimination and racism, but studies that portray black African managers as a homogenous group tend to perpetuate stereotypes. Relationships between black African managers and their white colleagues have generally been governed by stereotypes that portray black African managers as under-performers.

In the 1990s black authors working in the corporate world began writing about black managers. Prominent among these are the works by Qunta (1995), Madi (1997) and Luhabe (2002). These authors emphasise the importance of taking subjective experience into account. Qunta (1995), in particular argues that black managers' experiences have historically been overlooked. However, with the exception of Luhabe (2002) who categorises managers according to three socio-political and legal contexts: 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; these authors tend describe black managers as homogenous with similar workplace experiences. For example, Qunta (1995) reports that black (African) employees undergo "culture shock" as they adjust to working in an alien corporate world. One of the problems with such generalisations is that they do not acknowledge that increasing numbers of black African professionals have grown up in suburbia and for whom moving into the corporate world is not a culture shock. Another problem is that they do not take into account the variety of reasons why some black African professionals do not behave in ways prescribed by the organisational culture.

Watts (1985) argues that to avoid gross stereotyping of black (African) managers a researcher must examine their experiences and perceptions so as to acknowledge differences where they exist without ignoring the similarities. We find this useful as it helps one see how individuals construct their realities based on their particular experiences and background. In this study we are interested in the variety of strategies black African managers employ as they negotiate their identities in a university dominated by Eurocentricism. We learn about the processes of self formation in the workplace by focusing on the ways in which black managers navigate borders and boundaries they encounter as they move between home and work. We do not ignore common experiences shared by black African managers but we argue that the diversity in black African managers' experiences of working at a Eurocentric organisation is best captured in profiles. It is therefore appropriate to construct profiles of black African managers along a continuum. In this study the profiles represent identity clusters. Axes we used in the profiles are based on whether the home and work world are congruent and what adaptation strategies they use in their transitions between worlds.

While we would have liked to study black managers' experiences working in the four major English-speaking universities in South Africa, namely the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town, we limited this minor dissertation to a study of one university. This study has given us the opportunity to grapple with the conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues on a small-scale. Laying a foundation which will help us to tackle,

in due course, a larger study involving all four universities.

We adopted a qualitative approach to our study which involved face to face in-depth interviews with six black African managers. This, importantly, meant we allowed the respondents' own voices to emerge.

Our theoretical framework was informed Berger & Luckmann's (1966) "Social Construction of Reality and Phelan, Davidson and Yu's (1993 & 1998) "Multiple Worlds Typology". The theories proposed by these writers acknowledge that individuals move between multiple worlds as they go about their daily lives. Berger and Luckmann (1966) talk of the individual as one who is involved in reality construction as s/he negotiates identity, while Phelan *et al.* (1996) study the movement of individuals between different worlds and how they negotiate identity as they navigate the borders of between those worlds. Phelan *et al.* (1996) provide a framework with which we can crudely match individuals with different profiles,

We hope this study will contribute to a growing body of literature on the subjective experiences of black managers in the post-apartheid South African workplace as it gives us a glimpse of a spectrum of responses and a variety of strategies used negotiating identity.

In chapter two, which follows, we describe the institutional culture of English-speaking universities in South Africa. In chapter three we discuss the research problem and

theoretical framework. Our research methods are discussed in chapter four. We present a summary of the findings in chapter five and in chapter six we discuss the findings in the light of the theory and other pertinent literature.

Chapter 2: English-speaking Universities' Institutional Cultures

This chapter is about the history and organisational/institutional culture of English-speaking universities in South Africa. The institutional culture of universities is important as it is the culture in which staff, and in our case black African managers, are socialised.

The tertiary education system in South Africa (SA) is highly stratified, both vertically and horizontally. Universities occupy the top levels in what may be described as a three tier system, above colleges and technikons. (De La Rey, 1999). The universities are further categorized. These categories are reminiscent of the apartheid, which was designed to separate the races and therefore spawned an education policy that created separate universities for blacks, whites, coloured and Indians (De La Rey, 1999). Today the terms used to refer to universities are based on their status during apartheid; historically white universities (HWUs), which were reserved only for white students (black students were only allowed in under special circumstances), while the historically black universities (HBUs) were those for non-whites (blacks, coloureds and Indians).

HWUs are further divided into two categories, English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking universities. This distinction is important because of the very different institutional cultures at English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking universities. The different ways in which universities in the above-mentioned two categories responded to the political climate before and during apartheid, affected their institutional cultures.

The English-speaking HWUs are University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the University of Natal, Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town (UCT). These were historically heavily influenced by their English and Scottish origins, and this influence continues to this day (Welsh, 1979; Phillips, 1993 & 2002). As Phillips puts it "We shape our universities, therefore they shape us".

For example, Natal University's founding members were English and set up a system based on the tertiary education in England (History of Natal University: Available Online: http://www.ukzn.ac.za/aboutus/history.asp). UCT was largely founded by Aaberdonian Scots who modelled the institution on the Scottish system (Welsh, 1973; Phillips, 1993 & 2002; Saunders, 2000). This applied to both staffing and structure of the academic curriculum. Phillips (1993) describes the institution in its initial stages as a "...Male preserve dominated by graduates of the ancient Scottish universities, with South African born professors the exception... which could be counted on the fingers of one hand, even with some of the fingers missing". Although South African born academics would eventually take their place as lecturers and leaders of the university, their academic and practical way of doing things in the institution had been influenced and shaped by the Scottish legacy left by the universities founding staff.

Steyn and Van Zyl (2001) describe historically white English-speaking universities as liberal institutions. There is no doubt that the institutional cultures of the universities of Witwatersrand, Natal and Cape Town as well as Rhodes University have always been far more liberal than their Afrikaans-speaking counterparts. Welsh (1973: 24) argues about

UCT, the British-born and trained staff of the institution at its conception were "real heirs of the enlightenment of 19th-century liberalism". According to Welsh (1973) a form of this liberalism was translated into the university's institutional culture, but the political climate rendered staff incapable of fully expressing that liberalism.

The liberal tradition of these institutions and their policy-makers informed their opposition to apartheid. To their credit, English-speaking universities openly challenged the exclusion of black student from white universities (Welsh, 1973; Van der Horst, 1973). UCT, while it was still the South African College, admitted its first black students early in the 20th century, although the exact date is not known (De La Rey, 1999). Despite UCT being a favourite target of the Nationalist Party Government, its leadership stood firm and the institution continued to enrol black students. All four English-speaking universities took an anti-government stand during the apartheid era, mostly fighting the infringement of academic freedom. For example, when the Nationalist government disaffiliated Fort Hare (HBU) from Rhodes, academics loudly condemned the Separate Universities Act and its interference with academic freedom (History of Rhodes: http://www.answers.com/topic/rhodes-university-1). UCT also challenged the exclusion of black people from being appointed to academic posts. Strong evidence of this can be seen in the case where the government intervened and challenged the appointment of Mr. Mafeje to a senior lectureship position in the department of Social Anthropology in 1968 (UCT Council minutes, 1968). The inability to offer academic staff appointments to black people constituted a serious loss in academic freedom – an issue that was a source of discontent within the institution. The English-speaking universities' opposition to

apartheid is one of the features that distinguishes them from Afrikaans-speaking universities.

In post-apartheid South Africa, universities like all organisations have been on the receiving end of mounting pressure from the ANC government to implement policies and programmes of organisational transformation. The ANC Government is committed to redressing the wrongs of apartheid through Affirmative Action and Employment Equity as well as, through projects that are inspired by the notion of "African Renaissance". Liberal English-speaking male dominated universities are not exempted from this process of critical self-reflection and transformation.

Steyn and Van Zyl (2001) describe the culture at Wits as one that is still perceived to "represent the centralised position of whiteness and patriarchy... a culture that is experienced most acutely by marginalized people". In a study of perceptions of the institutional culture by members of staff at Wits Van Zyl *et al.* (2002) argue that by listening to the voices of black members of staff, solutions to the challenges of the transformation process are likely to be better and more effective..

Black managers' responses to the dominant, white, patriarchal institutional culture will be determined in part by their position within the institution, both in their relationship with colleagues and in terms of their hierarchical position. Similar research conducted at UCT of staff experiences of the institutional culture showed that black members of staff found the environment alienating because they also found it difficult to fit with the Eurocentric

norms and strong white-male dominance (Ismail, 2000). They felt excluded not only because of their race and culture, but also in terms of age, gender and language. In their study of Wits Van Zyl *et al.* (2002) say that there was the perception that those who fail to assimilate the Eurocentric culture were isolated and the institution tended to foster like-minded people who did little to challenge the institutional culture; and that those who did not assimilate to the Eurocentric culture were isolated (Van Zyl et al, 2002). Essed (2002) defines this as "Cultural cloning" and says that it "... is predicated on the taken-for-granted desirability of certain types, the often unconscious tendency to comply with normative standards, and the subsequent rejection of those who are perceived as deviant".

Although one can argue that the demographics of the staff at UCT and Wits are changing, most black members of staff interviewed in the above-mentioned studies (Ismail 2000, Van Zyl *et al.* 2002) felt that there is little evidence that the institutional culture had changed at all.

Chapter 3: Research Problem and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter we unpack and explain the research problem; in doing so we will make extensive reference to our theoretical framework.

We begin by restating the research problem. This is a study about the subjective experiences of black managers working in an English speaking university in post-apartheid South Africa. We investigated the adaptation strategies they employ as they navigate borders and boundaries between their home and work worlds, and how they negotiate identity in an environment dominated by Eurocentrism.

The key concepts are Eurocentrism, subjective experience, identity, strategies, worlds, borders and boundaries.

For the purposes of the study we use the Merriam-Webster definition of Eurocentrism as a "tendency to interpret the world in terms of western and especially European values and experiences" (Merriam-Webster Online: Available online, 2005. Http://www.m-w.com). We do not define the characteristic features of Eurocentrism because we have chosen to rely on how it is understood by our respondents. Some of the hallmarks that emerged in the interviews as being characteristics of Eurocentrism include: individualism, dominance of English (and the marginalisation of indigenous languages), aggressive competition, the notion that "West is best", white, and male dominated.

Schutz (1970) has used the term subjective experience to denote experience, thought and motivation that lies behind the actions of an individual; in other words, the personal meaning that an individual attaches to a given situation. The subjective meaning intrinsic to conduct is the meaning attached by the individual to his /her own conduct, his/her definition of the situation and the role s/he plays in that particular situation.

The concept of identity is a complex one. For our purposes it is suffice to say that we agree with Foucault and others like Derrida and Baudrillard, who have challenged a static view of self (Casey, 1995: 3). "To agree with the post-modern critics that the self is not a fixed and solid entity does not require an outright rejection of the concept. Rather, recognising the self as a pattern or constellation of constituent events and processes can still enable an understanding of the person who experiences a sense of agency, inwardness and individuality. The self is the fluid locus of ones subjective experience, it is where affect and reason one experiences and the capacity to act are beheld" (ibid). We choose to emphasise a view of self as a social construction shaped by institutional processes. Mead (1934) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasise the social construction of self through constitutive elements, dialectical processes, self-narratives and displays (Casey, 1995: 3). We see in Mead (ibid.) and Berger and Luckmann (ibid.) a view of self that encompasses both identity-making processes (biological, psychological and cultural processes) and self strategies. "The discursive constituents of subjectivity manifest itself in the strategies of self that individuals devise and practice within and against the ineluctable constants of social and cultural conditions." (ibid.: 4). These strategies are not static but are dynamic as individuals negotiate identity as a process of

becoming. In this study we emphasise the effects of institutional and social practices on identity formation.

For the purposes of this study, the term "world" refers to "cultural knowledge and behaviour found within the boundaries of black African managers' particular families and other private associates within the family ambience (e.g. neighbourhood, church, club) on the one hand, and their workplace" on the other (De Wet, Forthcoming). Each world "...contains values and beliefs, expectations, actions, and emotional responses familiar to insiders" (Phelan *et al.*, 1993: 53).

We refer to borders and boundaries as they are defined by Phelan *et al.* (1993 and 1998) who have drawn on Erickson's (1987) use of the terms. Boundaries refer to real and or perceived lines between worlds that are neutral. In this case sociocultural components are perceived to be equal by the people in different worlds (Phelan et al, 1993: 53). Movement across boundaries occurs with relative ease and psychological costs are minimal (ibid). Borders, alternatively, present real or perceived lines that are not neutral and sociocultural components in the different worlds are not perceived as equal. Movement across borders is managed with varying degrees of difficulty because knowledge as defined in one world maybe regarded with more value than knowledge in another. In their study Phelan *et al.* (1993: 57-59) describe various borders:

i.) Psychosocial borders are constructed when individuals experience anxiety or fear that hinders their ability to focus on their job or blocks the ability to form relationships with colleagues. Often psychosocial borders are encountered as a result of emotions and

feelings that rise when an individual deals with the other borders mentioned below. Psychosocial borders may sometimes manifest themselves as secondary to or as a result from sociocultural, race and gender borders.

ii.) Sociocultural borders are constructed when cultural components in one world are considered less important than those from another.

iii.) Gender borders are quite significant and are constructed when the organisation promotes roles or estimations of worth to women that differ from those accorded to men (Phelan *et al.*, 1998; 56-59). Phelan *et al.*, (1993; 12) go on to say that gender borders can be found in both the substance and the process of the workplace experience as well as in attitudes and expectations, i.e. gender borders not only undermine self confidence and block individuals perceptions of what is possible for themselves, but they also discourage or impede in the acquisition of capabilities required for occupational advancement.

iv.) Linguistic borders are those arise when one group regards another's group's language as unacceptable or inferior.

v.) Structural borders are those that impede, prevent or discourage individuals from engaging fully in the workplace. This could be because of a lack of adequate resources and supports or a lack of opportunity to access existing resources.

In our study we identify "race" as a further border. Phelan *et al.* incorporate "race" into socio-cultural borders. The reason for having "race" as a separate border is due to the fact that "race", in the South African context, still is an important factor in the positioning of individuals in inter-subjective realities. As a border, it is constructed when the organisation promotes roles or estimations of worth to black people that differ from those

accorded to white people. This means in the workplace the behaviour of white people is held up as more valuable and estimable than the behaviour of black people. White people are thus automatically perceived as being capable while black colleagues capabilities are indirect or directed questioned.

De Wet (2000) notes that black African managers working in white dominated organisations are likely to experience psychosocial, sociocultural, linguistic, gender and structural borders. Although it is possible for people to navigate borders with apparent success, these transitions can incur personal and psychic costs invisible to colleagues and others; and "boundaries can become impenetrable borders when the psychosocial and sociocultural consequences of adaptation become too great" (Phelan *et al.*, 1998: 10).

De Wet (forthcoming) argues that black African managers, like all individuals, are *mediators* and *integrators* of meaning as they move between their home and work worlds. During these transitions they negotiate their identities and construct their realities. With this in mind we draw on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). Social constructionism as a concept plays a major role in this study since it involves the ways in which individuals perceive and proceed to understand their life-worlds through their everyday experiences (De la Rey, 1999). It also involves the ways individuals negotiate their identities as they move between worlds.

Black managers can be analysed as individuals who are in an ongoing process of meaningfully interpreting their subjective experiences and perceptions. Reality

construction is based on these interpretations. Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality and the concepts "socialisation", "the world of everyday life", "maintenance and transformation of subjective reality" are central to our analysis of black managers' identity formation. "Socialisation" is an important part of reality construction. Socialisation is the process of interacting with one's "significant others" and as well as acceptance of the "world of everyday life". The "world of everyday life" serves as the environment within which human activity and communication occurs (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Subsequently, as Berger and Luckmann (1966: 149) argue, an individual is not born a member of society but rather internalises society through socialisation, i.e. the participation in a social dialectic where subjective meaning is both derived and expressed through perceptions and interpretations of an event or interaction. Socialization that occurs when growing up will have an impact on the way in which realities are constructed in the world of work. The meaning of everyday life originates from individual perception, thought, experiences, interaction and actions and is maintained as real through these. Through constant interaction with "significant others", the reality of everyday life further presents itself to individuals as an "intersubjective world" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schutz, 1970: 319), a world that they share with others.

Intersubjectivity involves both verbal and non-verbal communicative action; the process of sharing and engaging with another's subjective experiences. Schutz (1970) too, refers to individuals existing in multiple realities in an intersubjective world of shared meanings. Hence individuals who share a common world find themselves engaging and

exchanging meanings and experiences thereby increasingly the likelihood of defining common sense of reality. Face-to-face experiences with others enable an individual to be exposed to their subjectivity. Once individuals understand one another's meanings of shared situations they then define them reciprocally in what Schutz (1970) terms 'reciprocity of ideas'; that is to say they dialogically engage with the other person's subjectivity. It is the meaning an individual garners from his/her significant others that contributes toward the social construction of his/her reality and self formation. The significant others serve to reaffirm or confirm an individual's subjective reality. This applies to both positive and negative reaffirmations of the individual's reality.

Intersubjectivity and subsequently, the affirmation of one identity relies heavily on the individual's social situation and their peers occupying an important part of the processes. The process of engagement and interaction with significant others is a fundamental aspect of identity formation. While negotiating identity and self in multiple realities (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), individuals experience their reality in social settings with their significant others as well as a pre-existing objective reality. Multiple realities consist of the different social settings between which individuals move. The movement results in a shift in meaning and interpretation that the transition entails. In much the same way Phelan et al (1996: 52) are interested in how meanings and understanding combine to affect individuals in transition between multiple worlds.

A conspicuous feature, as argued by Schutz (1970), of intersubjectivity is "mutual understanding". Because each individual has different perspectives of the real world,

reciprocity of perspectives occurs when an individual is able to put him/herself in another's shoes and identify with others' perspectives of a shared situation. What can come out of this *inter alia* is the positive affirmation of ones reality or the construction of a new social reality based on understanding. At the other end of the spectrum, failure by an individual to explore and/or acknowledge subjective experiences of another often leads to a lack of mutual understanding and a break down in communication or other disturbances in the processes of interaction. Failure of understanding or communication breakdown, for example, results in ones reality being ignored, or dismissed but worse than that, one's self is undermined (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), internalisation is necessary for an individual to assimilate an objective reality of the world around him/her that is shared with others, for example, a social context such as institutional culture. Hence, "society, identity and reality are subjectively crystallised through this process" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 153). Internalisation is the process of understanding one's colleagues or 'others', and the acceptance of the world of everyday life. Through internalisation, individuals are socialised into a particular society and are able to give meaning to their own subjective realities as they engage in identity formation.

Where p*rimary socialization* occurs (from childhood) individuals encounter significant others who influence the process of turning them into members of society. Any subsequent process that inducts an already socialised individual into new social contexts such as the world of work is termed *secondary socialization* (Berger and Luckmann,

1966: 157). As in other contexts, socialisation in the world of work and subsequently identity formation are influenced by an individual's interaction with colleagues who are "significant others".

Berger and Luckmann (1966) go on to argue that "Subjective reality is thus always dependent upon specific plausibility structures, that is, the specific social base and social processes required for its maintenance"(1966: 174). As a result, one would expect that in the absence of procedures for subjective reality maintenance, there is a danger of inconsistency in the content of one's reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) say:

> "The formal processes of secondary socialization are determined by its fundamental problem: it always presupposes a preceding process of primary socialization; that is, that it must deal with an already formed self and an already internalised world. ...Whatever new contents are now to be internalised must somehow be superimposed upon this already present reality. There is therefore, a problem of consistency between the original and the new internalisations."

De Wet (forthcoming) says, "The 'problem of consistency' is about agreement and compatibility between the established subjective reality and the institutional culture the individual is expected to internalize". Where sufficient consistency exists between the worlds secondary socialisation builds on the primary internalisations and the established subjective reality. "In these there are partial transformations of subjective reality or of designated sectors of it. Such partial transformations are common in contemporary society in connexion with individual's social mobility and occupational training... But these transformations typically fall short of re-socialization. They build on the basis of

primary internalizations and generally avoid abrupt discontinuities with the subjective biography of the individual" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:181).

However, when worlds are significantly different and secondary socialisation seeks to radically transform subjective reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966; 161) would argue that individuals find themselves in a situation where they must either maintain or transform their subjective realities. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966: 158) secondary socialization takes place in the world of work as the individual internalizes the institutional culture. As Casey (1995: 3) argues, workplace conditions shape individual self. In the context of the workplace Casey (ibid.: 163) goes on to talk about "corporate colonisation" which "offers promises and obscures contradictions the self simultaneously struggles in various ways and with variable success, for a defensive self-protection, and assertive self-maintenance against these processes. The process of corporate colonisation generates psychic strategies or self styles for employees that fall broadly within three clusters: defence, collusion and capitulation". These strategies are adopted by employees when confronted with a world, incongruent to their home world, that they are expected to internalise.

Incongruency between worlds presents competing definitions of reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) warn of this when they discuss how the world of everyday life is threatened by the marginal situation of the human experience that cannot be entirely slotted into what one experiences as "everyday" activity. In such a case, this situation may be entirely different to the perceived reality of an individual, as they know it; such

that it poses a threat to the individual's existing reality. When individuals enter into a world of work significantly different from the world into they were socialised they are likely to experience challenges. Thus, Berger and Luckmann(1966: 35) would argue, as an individual moves from their home world into the work world that has a Eurocentric world view, s/he may experience the transition as a kind of shock, depending on the degree of variance between the different worlds. Qunta (1995) calls this a 'culture shock'. However it is important to point out that not everyone necessarily experiences shock and it may vary in intensity. Situations like this account for the resistance that some individuals display in particular contexts, which may often be a way of dealing with the "shock" of the shift in reality (Berger and Luckmann, ibid).

De Wet (forthcoming) argues that workers with no real commitment or sense of belonging to the workplace can fairly easily bracket what is learnt in secondary socialisation where it conflicts with their subjective reality, i.e. upon exiting the organisation they can leave behind the world of work. In such situations Berger and Luckmann (1966:162) say, "[t]his makes it possible to detach a part of the self and its concomitant reality as relevant only to the role-specific situation..." The situation is more complex for managers who are expected to take responsibility for formulating workplace policies and to demonstrate commitment to the organisational culture (i.e. values, beliefs, expectations and normative ways of behaving that are consistent with the world of work).

Phelan *et al.*'s (1998:4) study was also influenced by the broad assumption that "the

workplace is socially constructed by participants in the setting", that is, acknowledging that there are various contextual factors such as background, professional development, interaction with colleagues etcetera, affecting individuals' decisions, perceptions and experiences. Berger and Luckmann (1966) talk of individuals living in multiple realities and hence experience movement from one reality to another as a transition. Phelan *et al.* talk of border crossings between worlds when there is a lack of congruence between worlds, border crossing "...and adaptation are frequently difficult because the knowledge and skills or particular ways of behaving in one world are more highly valued and esteemed than those in another" (Phelan *et al.*, 1998: 10). Black managers' find themselves in a world where Eurocentric norms, values and practices are lauded above African ones. In this case, therefore, the transition may be experienced as a kind of shock, depending on the degree of variance between different worlds.

This next section pertains to the question of congruent and different worlds encountered during border crossing, as well as the adaptation strategies employed. Border crossing and the adaptation strategies employed by individuals, are not only part and parcel of the process of reality construction, but also reality and identity maintenance or affirmation; or alternatively, reality and identity transformation. These strategies will help us to understand how conflicting social contexts affect black managers' reality construction when they move between the worlds of home and work; and how they negotiate identity as they encounter borders.

We use Phelan *et al.*'s (1993 & 1998) typology of adaptation to understand what happens

when worlds are or are not congruent and the adaptation strategies that are associated with experiences of congruence or incongruence. Strategies they use as they move between worlds (De Wet, Forthcoming). This typology as a tool of analysis for generating profiles of managers from the data because Phelan *et al.* (1998) maintain that the experiences of encountering obstacles by individuals as they cross from one world to the next articulates the nature and dimension of the borders crossed. Hence, while some managers will find the transition a relatively simple and smooth process, others find it difficult or impossible.

Profiles

Phelan *et al* (1993: 59; 1998: 14-15) describe general patterns, which they uncovered during their study. These patterns, which become profiles, define the different types of transitions across borders and boundaries. We have chosen to use these, as they too can be applied to black managers as they move between their home and work worlds.

These are:

Type I: Congruent Worlds/Smooth Transitions

Type II: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings Managed

Type III: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings Difficult

Type IV: Different Worlds/ Borders resisted

Type V: Congruent Worlds/Borders resisted

Type VI: Different Worlds/Smooth Transitions

This typology is useful because it acknowledges different worlds without assuming that

the respondents' home and work worlds are always different; and neither does it assume that cultural difference will inevitably lead to difficulties and problems (De Wet, forthcoming).

Type I: Congruent Worlds/Smooth Transitions

In this first pattern, borders are easily managed since the individual is able to draw parallels between the two worlds in terms of beliefs, culture or accepted behaviour patterns etcetera. While this may not necessarily mean that the individual, in this case, the black managers in this profile come from a background with a similar culture as that of the organisation, there may be commonalities existing in the two worlds. Casey (1995; 169) seems to describe a similar strategy which she calls the "colluded self". This is a term we are reluctant to use. Casey (ibid.) describes the "colluded self" as experiencing little discontinuity between work and home worlds. Collusion is characterised by compliance, dependence ambition manipulability and visible displays of total dedication and identification.

Type II: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings Managed

For some individuals, the orientation between home and work worlds is different "thereby requiring adjustment and reorientation as movement occurs" (Phelan *et al*, 1993; 65). Individuals manage to cross the border from one world to another, but as Phelan *et al* (1998: 17) argue the crossings are not necessarily smooth. They identify three strategies

for negotiating identity:

i.) Conformity (Phelan, 1998:17): In the first situation, an individual will not find the transition across borders smooth but due to the differences between the home and the work environment, they may adapt totally, conforming to mainstream patterns while in the Western orientated institution. They hide aspects of their home world that might differentiate them from their peers and internalise the culture of the working world. In this case the disparities between the worlds may be so severe that the confusion this creates may lead to rejection of the home culture or language.

ii.) Adapting situationally (ibid.): The second strategy involves individuals adapting so as to conform to the norms and ways of the white organisation at work but outside of the organisation they revert to the norms and behaviour of the home-world.

iii.) Integration or blending in (Phelan et al. (1998) et al.'s term): In the third strategy an individual may draw from both worlds, blending aspects of their home life with their work life, in whichever life world they are in. Phelan, Davison and Yu (1996) go on to argue that, individuals falling under this category are able to both criticise and value aspects of their different worlds. Yet their stance leaves them vulnerable to attack or criticism from the different actors in different worlds.

Type III: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings Difficult

In this profile, like the former, individuals perceive their life worlds as distinct. Border crossing from one world into another, requires adjustment and reorientation as in *Type II*

and therefore, involves friction and discomfort and in some cases, is possible only under particular conditions (Phelan et al; 1993: 75). To illustrate: a black manager may enter the white organisation and have difficulty adjusting to the institutional culture that while s/he excels in his/her job, s/he does not fit in socially and does not attend social functions, or when s/he does so fails to interact with colleagues or clients on a social level.

Type IV: Different Worlds/ Borders Resisted

In this type the ways of seeing, being and doing across worlds are so incompatible that the respondents perceive the borders insurmountable. They actively or passively resist transitions. Their home worlds are so different from the work world that borders are perceived as insurmountable. The process of crossing often becomes the cause of severe distress which results in individuals actively or passively resist crossing (Phelan, Davison and Yu; 1996). Such individuals often develop strategies to protect themselves from distress. These seem to be similar to Casey's (1995; 164) "defensive self". The defensive self is characterised by "displays of multiple and various forms of resistances, retreats, rationalisations and blockages". Individuals are usually ambivalent, uncomfortable or anxious about the quality of their working environment (Casey, 1995; 164 & Phelan et al, 1993; 78).

Type V: Congruent Worlds/Borders resisted

While individuals may describe their worlds as congruent, they are unable cross borders.

These individuals lack motivation or tend to under perform in the workplace.

Type VI: Different Worlds/Smooth Transitions

Despite coming from different worlds, these individuals move across borders with relative ease. They have little trouble switching from one cultural mode to another, or blending in aspects of the home world into their work world. Individuals in this profile find their colleagues and conditions as supportive and enabling of bicultural and blended transcultural identities (Phelan et al, 1996; 15).

The profiles are determined by the social context of the home world and how different (or similar) it is from the work world. Given their backgrounds, their construction of subjective reality, as well as their experience of inter-subjectivity determines how they deal with challenges faced within an organisation and the problem solving strategies they adopt. Through analysis of the way in which black managers themselves interpret their life world and construct the subjective realities in which they, exist we can move away from crude essentialist thinking of '**the** black manager' as a single profile, toward an approach based on the way black managers themselves construct their own realties while coping with the organisational culture and significant others. Thus enabling us to see them for the different individuals that they are.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This is an exploratory and qualitative study. We are interested in the subjective experiences of black managers working at an English-speaking university in South Africa and, in particular, we are interested the challenges they face and the ways in which they navigate borders and boundaries and negotiate identities. We have adopted a qualitative approach because we were looking for information that allows the respondents' voices to emerge.

4.2 Sample

Due to the nature of the population from which the sample was selected purposive sampling was used. Neuman (2000: 198) defines this type of sampling as that which selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. Purposive sampling is appropriate in a number of situations; the one most relevant to this study is "...when the researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation. The purpose is not so much to generalise to a larger population, than to gain a deeper understanding of the types" (Neuman, 2000:198). We chose the respondents from a single university. This has a two advantages. Firstly, all the respondents were exposed to the same dominant organisational culture, and secondly, they were accessible.

A list of twenty one black African managers at the university was obtained from the Human Resources Department. From these, only six respondents were selected. This was due to the fact that as a mini-dissertation, this was conducted as a small-scale study

conducted in preparation for a major study in the near future. All six respondents were willing to participate in the study; four were male and two were female. Three of the six were heads of departments; one was both a head of department and director of a research unit; one was the dean of a faculty, and one was the manager of an administrative department. The first contact with the respondents was made via email and this was followed up by a visit in person to provide them with a letter explaining the nature of the research.

4.3 Data Collection Method

The study is about the subjective experiences of the respondents. In order to solicit "rich, thick data from our respondents we opted to use face to face in-depth interviews. All but one of the interviews was conducted between June and July of 2003. The last interview was conducted in January of 2004. The interviews were conducted in English; (although English is not the first language of any of the respondents) because the respondents are all fluent speakers; some are more comfortable speaking English than their own language. Each interview was captured on tape and then transcribed. We used a semi-structured interview schedule. Interview questions were constructed around a broad set of themes. These themes were derived from the theoretical questions which in turn arose form the central research question. Theoretical questions focused on the potential discrepancies and tensions between the respondents' home values and priorities and the values and priorities of the university, as reflected in the organisational culture. There are many factors that could affect an individual and the extent to which an individual may experience tension if any between his home and work worlds. These factors in turn

mould the respondents' experience, perception of and adaptation to the organisation.

The theoretical questions that arise therefore are: how do black managers negotiate self and construct their experience of reality when confronted by the borders and boundaries which separate the worlds of home and work?

An interview schedule was used as a guideline. It highlighted the key issues that developed out of the central research question. (See appendix for the full interview schedule). The interview schedule was piloted with a junior manager who was not included in the final analysis. Minor changes were then made, and these only involved the addition of new themes. The interview schedule (see appendix) was not highly structured so each interview often revealed new avenues of exploration because different individuals had different perceptions of similar issues. The interview questions, however, dwelt on the themes developed from the theoretical questions. These themes included:

1. Individuals' description of the organizational culture and how they experienced it.
2. The differences between work and home worlds. Was there any congruency? If not what were the differences and how did these differences pose a challenge?
3. Relationships with 'significant others' in the workplace, both black and white colleagues, and senior and junior colleagues.
4. Perceptions of transformation, as well as the individual's efforts to aid the transformation process.
5. There were both direct and indirect questions about challenges and coping strategies.

Focusing on these themes in the interviews was a way in which to garner information about how respondents perceived their work world in terms of values grounded in their home world. Their description of the organisational culture was pertinent as it enabled us to see how they located their identities within a culture that may or may not be different from their home culture. More often than not, the different themes would lead to a discussion of challenges as respondents revealed various tensions arising from incongruent home and work worlds. Their responses to these challenges were an important part of the discussion as they revealed the ways in which they negotiated their identities within the workplace.

The interviews lasted between 90 and 150 minutes and were tape recorded with the permission of respondents. While audiotape provided the best means of capturing the interviews we also took field notes. The tapes were then transcribed verbatim to facilitate analysis. Wengraf (2001: 210) and others argue for the importance of transcribing verbatim because this helps one "to get an accurate feel of the data".

4.4. Method of Analysis

Wengraf (2001: 224) describes an analytic model that was used with modification in this study. He describes what he refers to as a "Top down progression" which begins with the formulation of the central research question, from which the theoretical questions are derived as are the interview questions and other interventions that will produce appropriate materials for analysis. Hence analysis involves using the material obtained from interviews to answer the theoretical questions and from there summing these up to

answer the central research question. Wengraf emphasizes that theory is instrumental in the design of interview questions. Hence it is crucial that one remains cognisant of the theory not only when formulating interview questions but also during the interpretation of the interview material as this is what will provide the answers for the theory questions, and the central research question.

To a certain extent, analysis began during the data collection process. As most of the interviews were conducted within days of each other, it was possible while conducting later interviews to recall similar ideas or issues that emerged from prior interviews. This helped us modify the interview schedule, where necessary; it also helped us to start thinking about the data as it emerged. This occurred by noting down similarities and differences between interviews and between respondents.

Transcribing was done in most cases soon after the interviews. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and then checked for mistakes. Reading and re-reading the transcripts helped us to become familiar with the contents and organise the findings. Wengraf describes transcribing the data as an 'instrumentation process' (2001: 211) where data is converted from audiotape into visual data that can be manipulated for the purpose of analysis.

The next step involved the classification and re-organisation of the data. This was done with the help of NVIVO. NVIVO is a software tool fairly widely used in the analysis of qualitative data. Internationally recognised qualitative researchers such as Lee and Fielding (1998), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Wengraf (2001) emphasise the

importance of such software packages. NVIVO systematically organises qualitative data into a form that is suitable for retrieval as it enables one to access specific tracts of data.(Lee and Fielding, 1998, 88). NVIVO enables the data to be categorized by themes. Identification codes can be attached to the data. Using NVIVO one accessed the list of codes that have been assigned to the data and use these codes as "tags" to retrieve relevant segments of the text for analytic purposes. Codes not only help with the retrieval of the data, but with the classification of the data and grouping it into themes or categories. Once relevant text is grouped, using codes, into the relevant themes, it is then possible to engage in systematic analysis and subsequently interpretation of the data.

The themes used to guide the interviews were also used to categorize the data in the coding process. Miles and Huberman (1994: 97) suggest that one begins with a master code (the theme) and then develops sub-codes from that. Miles and Huberman (1994: 227) define codes as tags that assign meaning to a chunk of data and used to retrieve and organise that data. Wengraf concurs and says a code is a "retrieval tag attached to one or more segments of the text to enable one to think of them as related in some useful way. This is an important part of analysis where one identifies codes, which apply to each segment of the data.

Lee and Fielding (1998: 86), on the other hand suggest that categories or themes can also be obtained through brainstorming. This happens when a researcher reads and rereads the data and jots down possible themes. We used a combination of the two approaches. We began by identifying segments of data according to the themes that we had used in the

interviews. During the reading of the data and coding process some new pertinent themes emerged, for example respondents revealed in most cases, directly, that they felt alienated hence introducing 'Alienation' and 'Adaptation Strategy' were added to the existing themes 'Relationships' and 'Organisational Culture'. Some pre-existing themes fell away or merged with other new or pre-existing themes. Miles and Huberman describe a similar process happening when during the coding revision process one finds new themes emerging or new ways of relating codes that give way to new themes (1994: 62). De Wet and Erasmus (2005) note that, "codes bring together selected data and identify emerging themes" and "codes are particularly analytical as they link various segments of text to a particular concept".

Once the themes were developed, we then started on the second-level coding. De Wet and Erasmus, (2005) also refer to second-level codes as fine codes where the first level codes are broad themes that are then grouped into sub-themes. Often the same segment of text can have more than one code attached to it, for example, a segment of text under a first level code: 'Relationships' can have Three fine codes attached to it; 'Relationships with Whites' and 'Relationships Positive' or 'Relationships Negative'. Hence, a piece of text may be identified with more than one theme. Coding the data involves grouping like with like as Dey (1993: 95) argues, "so that any observation which seems similar to or related to others can be grouped with those observations". The codes were used to label text to be placed in the relevant themes. Sometimes codes took the form of a catchall phrase that represented a certain quality of the data and sometimes they took the form of an entire sentence that possessed a unique, pertinent quality.

The next step was to use the codes and themes to cluster data for the purpose of analysis. As the ultimate objective was to match individuals with one of the crude profiles, at this stage segments of the data with similar texts were grouped together to allow for comparisons between respondents so profiles could be identified. This was a somewhat difficult process since there were certain issues that respondents generally felt the same about, for example, they all reported that they found the institution to be Eurocentric even though their sense of belonging in the Eurocentric culture varied. The definitive criteria we used for assigning profiles were the adaptation strategies of the respondents, that is, their responses to the challenges they encountered. This was done at different levels. The first level was to separate those who experience the work place as a significantly different world from their home world from those who experience both worlds as congruent. At the next level the task was to determine if more profiles emerged amongst those respondents who experienced discontinuity between worlds. Their responses to the challenges of occupying different worlds were categorized by the degree of difficulty in crossing borders, i.e. Had they experienced them as easily managed; difficult-to-cross borders; or completely resisted crossing the borders? The following four profiles emerged from the data:

1. Congruent Worlds/Smooth Transitions
2. Different Worlds/Border-crossings Managed
3. Different Worlds/Border-crossings Difficult
4. Different Worlds/Borders Resisted

The findings were presented as profiles representing the clustering the data. The experiences and challenges in the workplace of individuals sometimes overlapped. Though the respondents experienced similar borders, there was a marked difference in the strategies they adopted and this made the process of profiling more manageable.

Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter we arrange the findings according to the profiles developed in Chapter Three and are guided by the challenges defined in the ***central research question***. To reiterate: the central research question seeks to explore the subjective experiences of black African managers in a historically white English-speaking South African university; to see how they navigate borders and boundaries, and negotiate identities? We are interested in the challenges they encounter while crossing borders and boundaries between worlds and the way they respond to the challenges translates into adaptation strategies. The profiles we use reflect patterns, convergence and clustering in the data and suggest ways the respondents negotiate their identities in the workplace.

The profile typologies are as follows:

Profile I: Congruent Worlds/ Smooth Transitions

Profile II: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings Managed

Profile III: Different Worlds/ Border Crossing Difficult

Profile IV: Different Worlds/ Borders Resisted

The type of borders and boundaries experienced under these themes included psychosocial, sociocultural, race and gender borders. To reiterate, while boundaries are easily crossed, borders are crossed with varying degrees of difficulty.

Profile I: Congruent Worlds/ Smooth Transitions

Respondent Eric

Phelan *et al.* (1996: 60) describe individuals who fall into this type as having values, beliefs and normative behaviours that are for the most part, parallel across worlds. Boundaries between home and work life are manageable and the transition is harmonious and uncomplicated. Phelan *et al.* (1996) are quick to point out that this does not mean that individuals act exactly the same way with colleagues at work as they would at home or vice-versa but rather commonalities in both worlds override differences.

Of all the respondents the manner in which Eric negotiates self while moving between home and work is closest to this profile. The borders, commonly experienced by the other respondents, are relatively absent in Eric's responses.

Congruent Worlds

From what Eric, said in the interview he makes transitions across the boundaries between his home and work with relative ease. There is sufficient congruency between his home and his work worlds, which he attributes to his being "socialised into Western values" while working in Europe. He said,

> *... I left **HOME COUNTRY** about 30 years ago, and then spent quite a bit of time in Europe, studying and working. I returned to South Africa in the late eighties... I had*

*originally started as an academic in **HOME COUNTRY** and then that lead to my further studies in the UK and I did other things including working for International Non-governmental Organizations. So when I came to **THE UNIVERSITY**... I had international experience.*

(Source: Interview #2)

The European influence from his time overseas is abundant in his home life. He mentioned that his home-life is Western orientated and his children are "completely Eurocentric". He said:

What happened in my case was that both my wife and I, I think we were sufficiently socialized you know, in the Eurocentric environment and so we were able to cope with it. My wife in many ways is in a similar situation and unfortunately the kids are completely Eurocentric and one of my biggest regrets is that they don't speak an African language. Their attitude toward life is very Western and they have a very romantic view of being African... So my biggest regret from my own side is that I have not succeeded in infusing a sufficiently African outlook in our children.

(Source: Interview #2)

He does, like all the other respondents, describe the institutional culture as being Eurocentric, however, he indicates that he is able to cope with the Eurocentrism of the environment. He said, *"...so coming into the Eurocentric environment [I] was able to cope with it"*. He mentioned that the experience from his time overseas also helped him fit into the university environment when he first joined it.

I came here quite used to working with, people who do not necessarily share the same values. ... South Africa being South Africa. So at the personal level I never had any problems, right, I still don't.

(Source: Interview #2)

He focused on his work and went along with the organisational work ethic. In the

following extract he describes how he progressed up the organisational ladder because he conformed to the expectations of the dominant culture of the organisation:

> *I worked my way up and eventually took over the unit. I proved myself in a sense and even then my attitude was not to cause trouble. I went along with the dominant ethic of the faculty life.*
>
> (Source: Interview #2)

He partly attributed his ability to succeed in this environment to his wife who shares these values. He said:

> *My wife is in many ways Westernised... luckily I'm married to a woman who is a super human being in many ways. I mean she manages to - I'm on the road a lot - , manages not only to do a very demanding job as a physician... but also keeps her family together.*
>
> (Source: Interview #2)

To this extent Eric typifies an individual whose worlds are congruent. There are differences between his home and work worlds but the commonalities override the differences. The organisational etiquette, communication styles, prescriptions for success (which include compliance, hard work, and research achievements), and pervading upward mobility norms match many of the values, beliefs and behaviours of Eric and his family.

The only border is managed relatively easily

Eric, however, acknowledged that he did encounter what he identified as "challenges in terms of racism". He said, "...in fact, working in this environment it's impossible not to come across, you know certain challenges in terms of racism". This challenge presented

itself as a race border boundary that he was able to cross with relative ease. When he first arrived he expected the university environment to be overtly hostile towards black people. He found that on a personal level this was generally not his experience and his colleagues interacted with him in a more hospitable manner than he expected. He said, "At a personal level people were very friendly, I was pleasantly surprised, it wasn't the kind of prejudice I had feared". However, he did recall an incidence where he said he entered a staff room in his Faculty and was told by a lecturer that the room was only for staff members and not students and cleaners. He explained:

> *...the assumption was that, you know, whenever any black walked in there you had to be either a student or a cleaner, not a colleague in a staff capacity. So that is the kind of challenge that seeps into all sorts of attitudes in the Faculty.*

(Source:Interview #2)

The manner in which he dealt with this incident reveals that because he expected to find some racism he was able to dismiss such an incident more easily than if he had not been psychologically prepared for it and did not allow it to distract him from excelling at work; thereby, demonstrating that he had crossed the race border. His attitude toward this and his work reveals the strategy he adopted to make the transition successfully. He said, "My attitude then was: I came in and brushed that aside and I immersed myself in work". He reiterated this when he said he was so preoccupied with his work as a lecturer, researcher and administrator that he did not allow such incidents he and others experienced to "get him down". Eric said,

> *I came here and I made a conscious decision that I will try and make the best of it because for me it was an environment that allowed me to try and contribute, I couldn't as I said for various reasons return to HOME COUNTRY and this would help me at least to contribute to Africa and the region so I took it upon*

myself to make the best of it. It also helped that I was able not only to throw myself in my work that I was able to do a lot of outside work in a sense that it took me away from the sheer frustration of the [race] dynamics of the institution; the dynamics of apartheid.

(Source:Interview #2)

While there is a great deal of continuity and congruency between his home-world and work-world, this does not exempt him from experiencing marginalisation in his workplace. While he personally has adopted strategies to deal with covert racism and 'learnt to play the game' he identifies with black colleagues who feel marginalised, unwelcome, and who were 'frightened away'. He is convinced that historically part of the problem lies in the lack of commitment by senior management to transformation. . He said:

*Transformation in the **UNIVERSITY** it has hardly started and this is after having been at it at least systematically since 1994 onward. We got a Dean that I think is deeply committed to change even beyond the self interest. But the [black] people come in and they don't stay and my interpretation of that, I believe that it's not simply a question of these people being attracted to better paying jobs outside. It's a reflection on the environment in the **UNIVERSITY**. As I mentioned this institution is quite hostile, particularly hostile to outsiders and that goes for typically black people and women. You feel marginalized as an African - a non-Afrikaner speaking African - ... my sense is that there are people who are committed to an academic career, but those that have come and tried to follow that route for the major part are frightened away by hostile attitude towards blacks.*

(Source:Interview #2)

Any personal feelings he has of marginalisation are buffered by his submerging himself in his work. He admits that this behaviour does make him feel secluded and this seems to worry him.

(Interviewer: You speak about marginalisation. With regards to yourself personally, would you say you are marginalised in this kind of situation?) Well...To a certain extent. One tends to be alienated because you sort of gate what you see around you and you move into your own cocoon and just do your work.

(Source: nterview#2)

The picture that one gets is that, since he is very busy holding up various positions of management and directorship within and outside the institution there is almost no time for him to dwell on the alienating nature of the institution. In fact, the more time we spent on the issue of alienation the more time he spoke about alienation in the context of the students. While he acknowledges that black people and women are regarded as 'outsiders' in the institution he sees himself personally as an 'insider'. He says, '... *you must remember at least from 1997 onwards I was an insider'.*

His confidence within his environment also allowed him to challenge the system. He has initiated a programme in his department in aid of transformation and while he has encountered subtle hostility in some areas and open hostility in others he has not let this stop his endeavours.

That people really wanted to transform actually I started to question that. Everything we were trying to do was being shot down. So last year for instance I started being much more assertive.

(Source:Interview #2)

The above quote shows another of the factors that makes Eric relatively suitable for *Profile I.* He is aware of his authority and the extent of the power he has in the institution

and is not hesitant to use it and does not fear rocking the boat as it were. It bothers him that black and women employees and students come into the Faculty but do not stay long:

> *...people come in and they don't stay and my interpretation of that which I think, I believe quite a number of things that its not simply a question of these people being attracted to better paying jobs outside it's a reflection on the environment in the faculty this as I mentioned this faculty is quite hostile, particularly hostile to outsiders and that goes for typically black people and women. But those that have come and tried to follow that route for the major part are frightened away by hostile attitude towards blacks.*
>
> (Source:Interview #2)

He downplays his own experiences of hostility. He is not immune to racism or hostility but he recognises that his experiences are not as pronounced as what he thinks is typical for black people and women that come into the institution and struggle to adapt to the culture.

He and one other male respondent, Cetshwayo, personally did not experience gender borders but their comments reflected that they were conscious of women's experiences of marginalisation at the university.

Eric has very few black colleagues; the black people he comes in contact with in his work environment are his juniors or students. With his juniors he has taken a mentoring role which he feels as a leader he is obligated to carry out. He says, "*But one needs, as a leader, to mentor the young academic*" (Source: Interview #2).

Such is his awareness of his advantages in terms of the experience that has helped him cope with his position of leadership and authority that his transformation efforts include uplifting young black academics. His attitude, as a leader, has been one of championing the cause of black people as he feels they do not have the same advantages to thrive in the institution as he does. He says:

> *Rather, begin convincing people that it's in their own self interest to overcome these functional prejudices that they hold against people, that's what matters. And slowly I think, if I may put it that way, it is possible I think, occasionally to be listened to. As a result, in terms of what we are doing as a [department] we started a very good programme of which I was part of in terms of its research and that programme was to recruit young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. And you must remember at least from 1997 onwards I was an insider. I was a bearer in terms of helping, making decisions because I believed it could be done.*
>
> (Source:Interview #2)

Eric describes his role in setting up this programme and calls himself an "insider". This suggests a significant level of compatibility with his work environment. Coming into an environment that he describes as hostile to black people and being confident enough to refer to himself as an insider reveals the extent to which his congruent worlds have helped the smooth transition across boundaries between his home and work worlds. For Eric the values, beliefs, expectations and normative ways of behaving in his work world are sufficiently similar to those in his home world for the worlds to be congruent. Race borders exist but they are crossed with relative ease as he downplays them. While he has displayed smooth transition into his work world, he is without regret: he says, "*My biggest regret from my own side is that I have not succeeded in infusing a sufficiently African outlook in our*

children." (Source: Interview #2)

None of the other respondents display this level of congruency as they all highlight the differences between worlds.

***Profile II*: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings Managed**

Respondents Cetshwayo and Dumisani

Phelan *et al.* (1996: 65) describe individuals in this typology as those whose worlds are different. Regardless of these differences, the individuals' perceptions of the borders between the worlds do not prevent them from managing to cross these borders and adapting or conforming to their environments. Crossings are managed with relative ease as individuals develop a capacity to blend aspects of the home world into the work world.

Cetshwayo and Dumisani seem the closest fit to this profile.

Different worlds

Both Cetshwayo and Dumisani defined the culture as being Eurocentric and white.

> *It's definitely Eurocentric. This is a white university with the majority of white males.*
>
> (Source:Interview#5)

> *...I'd think the institutional culture is still very much white, Eurocentric and all that goes with the...*
>
> (Source:Interview #1)

Cetshwayo further describes the culture as being characterised by values different from his own. Moreover these values are set so rigidly that some people [white people] within the institution do not acknowledge or respect diversity. Hence there is a 'way of doing things' and to Cetshwayo, it looks as if the general perception is that 'it is the only way'. He says,

> *... We have different values. There is the issue of transformation here. To what extent are we willing to respect diversity? Are we prepared to be creative, are we prepared to be pluralistic... it's not hard but it's just that some people are used to a certain dominant way of doing things. They think this is the only way but it is not.*
>
> (Source:Interview #1)

Dumisani says that he finds the culture of the institution isolating and individualistic. He says,

> *Also the fact that you seem to be isolated in this place. With very few Africans, and the white culture is such that it is isolative by definition. It is very individualistic. The environment is not created to bring in people even if the university brings in people from outside... people in this place are isolated and the university forgets about them?*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

They both, like Eric, have also experienced international exposure which they feel contributed significantly to their relatively smooth transition from home to work. Cetshwayo worked and studied overseas and so echoes Dumisani's sentiments when he

says,

> *I have studied at international universities overseas. I am aware of this type of situation... I've been involved with this culture so I am able to cope.*
>
> (Source Interview #1)

However, what places them in *Profile II* and not *Profile I,* despite international exposure like Eric, is that these two respondents highlight that their home culture is substantially different to dominant culture at work. Dumisani expresses this well when describes how his work and home worlds are different and have two distinct cultures. He says:

> *Some of us have been socialized into the Western culture though retaining our African culture. So one moves between those two cultures.... you have to respect particular institutions. If there is a ceremony in the township, you cannot say I am busy doing this I cannot go to the ceremony. When you come here you come to a different situation. So there is tension between one's culture and the western culture. You have friends in the township who behave in a different way and colleagues here who behave another way. So being black, you're exposed to... you have to behave in various ways.*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

Cetshwayo also acknowledges that generally black managers face a different culture in the workplace when he says, "*The culture... that they [black managers] are operating in is a very strange culture with very different values*".

Borders Crossing Strategies

Nonetheless both have tried to selectively integrate certain African traditional values into

the way they do things in their work environment. By blending aspects of their home world into the work world they were able to do their jobs well without hiding or devaluing traditional aspects of their home world that differentiate them from their work world. Dumisani encounters sociocultural borders, where he feels that African languages should be more widely used in the university-wide context. He responds by trying to insert some of his own values into the system. He talked about how the use of African languages in the university environment was previously virtually non-existent saying, "little or no recognition is given to African languages." He is unhappy with the status quo where little recognition is given to these languages. He says,

> *I mean, for example if you go for an interview for an African languages post, the interview is conducted in English. You cannot speak Xhosa even if you want to teach Xhosa. People need to realize the need for African languages, especially the business community. It's only now that the university is beginning to realize the importance of African languages for students who have to serve the community.*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

Through his and others efforts this is changing. He says,

> *Knowing the status of African languages and to an extent the negative perception surrounding them, well, because these languages are not fully recognised or realised by the university. As a result one has to put across the need for learning the languages. So there is a gap, an amount of work that needs to be done to change this perception of African languages and its people. And we are trying to do it [to change].*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

Sometimes the attempt to integrate their home culture into the work world is in direct conflict with the work culture. This implies that individuals are sometimes faced with a

struggle to integrate the cultures of their two worlds without disrupting the organisational system. Cetshwayo illustrates:

> *I have very much kept almost an open door policy which makes administration work rather hard but I've tried to be as accessible as possible. I think it has to do very much with where I come from and my African understanding of the mind and so on. Sociability is an important thing and so I've tried to do that. This may conflict with other [*Western*] values of time management.*
>
> (Source:Interview #1)

Both respondents feel that the institution expects them to conform; hence conformity presents itself as a sociocultural border that Cetshwayo and Dumisani have to cross. Hence through integration of cultures, they have both developed strategies to help them cross this border. In the main, they both conform to the dominant culture but where possible they take the opportunity to integrate African traditional practices. An example of this is when Cetshwayo says he subscribes to an open door policy even when it is in conflict with western values of time management. This indicates a type of sociocultural border that he has encountered and had to cross.

Cetshwayo and Dumisani are two out of three respondents who indicated practicing a consensus based management style. They said that their African values governed their management style, which they described as participative. This is further illustrative of a coping strategy whereby they try and insert their own values into the system. Cetshwayo says:

> *I was able to get new people and to give each one a responsibility so that you show people that the whole thing does not depend on you. We all work together. In that way everybody becomes happy and they see themselves to be valued. And*

there is consensus... African democracy as I understand is consensual democracy. You want to get consensus from everybody involved.

(Source:Interview#1)

Dumisani shares the same sentiments,

In that sense as leader I believe you are there to lead. It doesn't mean you are there to dictate. I believe in participative management where you bring everybody on board... and then you arrive at a consensus.

(Source:Interview #5)

Consensus is clearly an important part of their management style. Cetshwayo draws a link between achieving consensus in the way one leads and what he calls 'African democracy'. This, again, shows that while they try and conform to the Eurocentric culture of the institution, behaving in the way it demands of them, in their own ways they try to integrate some values of their own culture in the way they do things. This is not in defiance of the dominant culture, but it seems rather that they insert values of their culture for two reasons: firstly to be able to work in way they feel will is best for their departments, and secondly, as an adaptation strategy that helps to smooth what would otherwise be a difficult transition.

Despite struggling against conformity, both respondents however agree that one ends up having to conform to the dominant culture. Cetshwayo says,

The culture... that they [black managers] are operating in is a very strange culture with very different values, a culture where they are driven by competitive methods, that is driven by fighting for everything aggressively because you need to be aggressive. If you refuse to join in that, either because you feel it's ridiculous which I think it is in any case, actually if it was me I would tell them,

this is ridiculous and I don't want to be part of it. But of course you never get to say that and you wouldn't dare say that because, it's not the politically correct thing to say in the situation.

(Source:Interview #1)

Dumisani echoes the same sentiments when he says more or less the same thing.

The community that we serve...you take it in the sense that this is a white university and all that goes is that you have to conform. You just have to, disregarding the fact that we're serving Africans.

(Source:Interview #5)

While one 'wouldn't dare say anything' against the western cultural values they do not agree with, both respondents have demonstrated that should an opportunity present its self, they do not hesitate to integrate their own African values.

Both respondents experience psychosocial borders, which they have managed to cross. To reiterate, while certain experiences can create psychosocial borders, they are sometimes constructed in response to sociocultural borders. In this case as a result of different worlds psychosocial borders arise when individuals feel they have to conform to the dominant culture of the institution. At the same time, both Cetshwayo and Dumisani feel that black Africans bear, what Kwenda (2003) refers to as the 'cultural burden' where their conformity to the Eurocentric culture is taken for granted. Cetshwayo says, "The world works because some of us make those sacrifices for which we are not even recognised... we are not producing optimally when the relationship is so skewed. This burden has got to be shared. This makes both respondents feel that as Africans they have had to make sacrifices in terms of their own values and identity and be more

'accommodating'. As Cetshwayo illustrates,

> *Its only if the one side that is doing that, that is surrendering, that is giving, and is not getting anything in return and then you get the same people who are only receiving all the time turning around and charging you with, you just quiet all the time you are not aggressive enough, you are not this...they don't see that they are sapping the energy from this people.... You'll probably, the only person in the situation that who's bilingual in a meaningful way, in a way that makes communication critical, communication possible in order to get objectives and goals achieved in the company or organization or whatever. If some of us chose today to okay we will be like everyone else we each speak our own languages we each stick to our own cultural values and so forth the whole world would stop. People never looked at it that way.*
>
> (Source:Interview #1)

He goes on to describe this situation as one of victimisation.

> *So you have a situation that victimizes you once and victimizes you again, you are making all the sacrifices, instead of being recognized for the sacrifices you are making you are actually blamed for under performing.*
>
> (Source:Interview #1)

Dumisani also shares the same sentiments and says, when prompted to give an example where he would be 'accommodating' of another's culture where it is the dominant culture,

> *You would behave cautiously when dealing with a person coming from a different unfamiliar situation than you would from another person. When you are angry you are angry... a person from the western culture would approach you within his/her culture and you would normally need to behave and accommodate that person... I cannot relate to particular instances where you sort of give in but because this person doesn't understand your culture so you sort of compromise*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

While Cetshwayo seems to experience a level of discomfort with the fact that he has to be more accommodating. Dumisani on the other hand attributes this to the accommodating nature of African people. When asked why he feels he has to be accommodating or to compromise.

> *... To get out of that situation. I mean African people are accommodating by definition. And we have gone through terrible things in our lifetime and we have accommodated the situations. And we are a polite people by definition... somebody asks you something and you don't want to do that... to resolve the issue you normally do it. Our nature is such that we become pliable and more accommodating rather than intimidated. Unlike the western people who are individualistic. By virtue of the fact that we are more communal... We are a group people and not individualistic. Therefore we need to be accommodating ...*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

While being accommodating is sometimes an adaptation strategy for the two men, it can also result in psychosocial borders. Cetshwayo feels that his accommodating nature has been taken advantage of such that he has been victimised again and again. Dumisani also feels that being black and accommodating by nature has meant that that one is in a position where people are continuously taking advantage of you. He said,

> *And that, you need to ask yourself if you were white would a white person ask you to do this? Would a white person say this to you? Or isn't he or she asking you to do this because you're a black person.*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

Both respondents indicate that they do not have any negative relationships with their white colleagues. Hence they do not face any borders with regards to their relationships.

Dumisani says of his relationships,

> *I am not aware of any negative issues or tensions.*
>
> (Source:Interview #5)

Cetshwayo on the other hand is more buoyant in his response,

> *Quite amicable, really... I think I have had very sound, very good relationships, positive with all my colleagues. I have received support from all of them and advice.*
>
> (Source:Interview #1)

Cetshwayo has fewer black colleagues than Dumisani, but both indicate that they have sound relationships with them. Like Eric they have both taken on a mentoring role for their younger colleagues as Cetshwayo, who speaks for both, indicates,

> *So you say to them, these young colleagues, in order to survive this place you need to focus on core work. Try to publish as much as you can, teach as well as you can... that's the art of survival.*
>
> (Source:Interview #1)

***Profile III*: Different Worlds/ Border Crossing Difficult**

Respondent: Lindah

Under this profile type, like in Profile II, individuals define their worlds as distinct (Phelan et al, 1996: 74). They must adjust as they move between home and work worlds, but unlike the former, they find border crossing more difficult. While border crossing is possible, transitions incur significantly high psychic and personal costs that are often

invisible to others.

Different worlds

While Lindah does not describe the institutional culture in detail, she does mention in the following extract that the culture of a minority (meaning white people) is the dominant culture at the university and that the other cultures are marginalised.

> *...the minority culture is the dominant culture and the UNIVERSITY HAS not come to terms with accepting the fact that there are other cultures that must be taken into account.*
>
> (Source:Interview#6)

Lindah felt that her white colleagues at the university do not acknowledge peripheral cultures. It also concerns her that they take no interest in her cultural background.

> *(Interviewer: do you feel your white colleagues understand your home culture and its values.)They can't because they know nothing about it. That's a problem. They are not interested in knowing about a different culture.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

She speaks about feeling isolated and unsupported in a hostile working environment in which she is made to feel like an outsider.

> *You're on your own. So I just find that frustrating and when you deal with that all the time it becomes an uphill battle all my life [all the time].*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

Borders and Crossing strategies

Lindah, a woman and senior manager in the institution, has experienced sociocultural, psychosocial, race and gender borders, sometimes simultaneously. When I asked her whether at times she has ever felt undermined by her colleagues because she is a black woman she said:

> *Yes. I've had people who have for example writing directly to the **LINE MANAGER** about certain issues, without consulting me first. Initially they are supposed to talk to me first about issues if they have problems with my decision then they can appeal to **MY LINE MANAGER**.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

The following excerpt highlights her race and psychosocial borders. She describes her experience in the university as an "uphill battle". She went on to explain, by way of example, what she meant by "uphill battle" implying that being white meant putting up less of a struggle than she did as a black person:

> *And when things come from white people they sail through. If an idea comes from a white person in the university it sails through. Even if it's your idea and a white person presents it will sail through. With you have to fight before you get it.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

She goes on to describe the nature of the borders challenges she faces as a black woman in a position of leadership.

> *There are some frictions here and there where you detect attitudes of people who kind of think 'oh, I am reporting to a black woman' and people are not used to*

that. And they tend to be offhand, and negative attitudes, and so on.

(Source:Interview #6)

She has however come to learn to deal with this challenge where she is undermined because of her race and gender by being more assertive:

> *So you learn to deal with these people. You learn to put your foot down and assert your position and say I'm the head of this department and you will listen to what I have to say.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

Crossing the gender boundary has not been easy. Finding out that relative to her peers in similar positions across South Africa she was the lowest paid individual in the country. She battled to get the issue addressed. When asked which posed a greater challenge for her, her race or gender, she replied:

> *Well, if the issues I had to go through are considered ... it's almost an equal balance of both. The discrimination between me and all the other people in terms of remuneration were probably based on race and gender. The way some female executives were remunerated appropriately made me question why me, then you think it's racial because all the other women are not black. Then you think its gender because I spoke to four senior black people in the university including the line manager and nothing was done and I felt that it was a gender issue.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

So great was the magnitude of the gender border that she ended up using legal means to settle the matter of her remuneration. Taking the institution to court caused her great distress and discomfort hence making her psychosocial borders even harder to cross.

When asked if there are racial barriers that she has come across in the context of her work

environment as a manager she says,

> *For example if you look at the staff of the department. We have white, black, coloured and Indian people. And certain cultural values are often infringed upon. My job is working with this group bringing them together and not emphasizing their differences but respecting their differences. That no one is superior or inferior and that's difficult. (Interviewer: Please elaborate...)*
>
> *Well in meetings you find others [whites] talking down to certain people. So the danger is that [when I act] white people feel I'm not supporting them because I'm not white. But other times black people are doing certain things that are unacceptable and feel that I'm supporting white people. Such that at most times my credibility is on the line.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

Lindah's comment suggests that she feels that because she is a black manager, her leadership role is more complicated and that she is under constant judgment from both black and white colleagues such that her 'credibility is always on the line'. This is a position she finds very stressful.

However, she is quick to point out that she is capable of doing her job and does it well. Despite encountering race, gender and subsequently psychosocial borders she demonstrates in the following excerpt that she has crossed them. Her crossings however are not easy as she indicates that she has to 'fight'.

> *...I'm the only black woman in the senior leadership group. So if people think that I am getting preferential treatment. It's not like that. I have to fight for every single issue or thing that I want. So they don't give it to me BECAUSE I'm black but because of what I put on the table.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

Lindah goes on to illustrate the challenges facing black managers and the idea that black managers bear the burden of having to work extra hard in the institution to prove their competency and also because of a lack of support.

> *And when things come from white people they sail through. If an idea comes from a white person in the university it sails through. Even if it's your idea and a white person presents it will sail through. With you have to fight. Before you get it. So you find you are always fighting. Pushing, working hard just to get things through.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

Again she talks about '*fighting*'. While this might suggest that she is to a certain extent in conflict with some of the values imposed by the system, it also suggests an adaptation strategy to race and gender borders. Hence, as she says, she is always, '*pushing, working hard just to get things through.*'

She faces sociocultural borders when confronted with different cultural practices and sometimes it is difficult to deal with this difference. Her traditional African reverence for her seniors is illustrated in the following example:

> *We come from different backgrounds. I know that students write to the vice chancellor and use his [first] name. I can't do that. Not to his face. Because in my culture I can't bring myself to call someone in that position by his first name. So it depends on the formality of the situation. I think we need to respect one another's comfort and where they come from.*
>
> (Source: Interview # 6)

Lindah finds the sociocultural border a difficult one to cross in this context. She says,

> *(Interviewer: Have you ever felt you had to compromise your values as an*

African person in this institution?) Not really. I've had disagreements with my senior's colleagues I have always maintained professionalism. I know what my job entails and what I have to do

(Source:Interview # 6)

Her response reveals an adaptation strategy which she expounds upon in the following excerpt. While she maintains 'professionalism' in spite of disagreements with her seniors she also tries to be more assertive. She says:

So you learn to deal with these people. You learn to put your foot down and assert your position and say I'm the head of this department and you will listen to what I have to say.

(Source:Interview # 6)

When asked about her relationships with her colleagues she indicates that she has good relationships due to the fact that she has been in the institution for a significant number of years:

Well I have very good relationships with these people at one level and the people that report to me... although whether its out respect for me and my position and my role or whatever other reasons they are obliged to report to me whether they like it or not.

(Source:Interview # 6)

She, however, differentiates between levels of friendship. She seems to mistrust the reasons her colleagues maintain good relationships with her. She feels that it might only be because they have to report to her and hence are obligated to maintain good relationships with her. The result is therefore that while she has good work relationships she does not take these relationships outside work and in fact keeps her two worlds, home

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and work separate.

> *No I don't [have a social relationship with my colleagues] and you can call that one of the challenges because in this position these directors that report to me, its difficult to have a social relationship – a personal relationship – I know some of them very well, but there's a limit to what we can talk about as a result of that boss-employee work relationship...So you end up being really alone. So I keep my personal life far removed from work life.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

Keeping her worlds separate maybe an adaptation strategy to deal with sociocultural borders but it is not without costs. These costs are in the form of a psychosocial border when she eventually ends up '*being really alone*' (Source: Interview #6).

Despite her experiences she jokes about her management style, which is not unlike that of Cetshwayo and Dumisani, i.e. a style based on the participation of everyone concerned and consensus. Like her counterparts, she also uses the integration of her home culture into her work world as an adaptation strategy. She says,

> *I always joke that I run my department like I run my household. I always include everybody. Everyone has a say. Even if at the end the decision is mine I like to hear everyone's view and hopefully get a consensus.*
>
> (Source:Interview #6)

While Lindah seemed to have crossed her borders what suggests that she did so with extreme difficulty is the fact that for her the psychosocial costs eventually prove to be too great and she resigns her position in the institution. The interview was conducted after she had handed in her resignation. Lindah indicated that the dominant culture of the institution was such that it demanded a lot of one's time infringing on her family life such

that she was unable to cope with these demands. Unlike the one other female respondent (see *Profile IV*) who insists that she will not put in any extras like work over time, Lindah has gone along with the dominant work ethic of the culture, goes along with the demands of the institution and works overtime. She says:

> *So mostly you find I am up here in the evenings, at weekends. ... So I find that the job has just taken over my life. My family life is non-existent. Saturday I have to be here, Sunday sometimes I have to be here. And the person who can do this job has to be the one who can find that time. So that's part of it.*
>
> (Source: Interview #6)

While she seems to a certain extent to exhibit patterns of behaviour that could suggest that she has managed to cross her borders as the respondents in *Profile II* what makes her more suitable for *Profile III* is that the fact that the personal and psychic costs have been too great. Her border crossings eventually emerged as difficult as she eventually does suffer discomfort and in distress in the form of burnout.

> *At the moment I'm just burnt out you know... because you burn out. So that if you like is one of the problems...*
>
> (Source: Interview #6)

The pressure eventually takes its toll on her and it is for this very reason that she eventually resigns. She says:

> *[Generally] institution is very good at recruiting people. People genuinely want to work here. But once they get here, especially black people, (and if you look at all the black people that have left they've gone onto other government jobs so its not really a sense in that they are being used in another capacity or the good of the country) but if you look at the reason why they have left, it was not because they were looking for another job. It was because they were not happy here.*
>
> Source: Interview #6)

Profile IV: Different Worlds/ Borders Resisted

Respondents: Nomathemba and Sipho

Individuals in this profile experience the values and expectations so discordantly across worlds that border crossing is resisted or impossible. Phelan *et al.* (1998) argue in this case that often, when border crossing is attempted, it is so painful that individuals develop a rationale to protect themselves against further distress.

This profile seems to best describe Nomathemba and Sipho's experiences of the University and how they navigate the borders between home and work.

Different Worlds

Both Nomathemba and Sipho described the institution as 'white' and Anglo-Saxon while Nomathemba goes further to express that it's liberal and patriarchal.

> *...it's a historically white institution and a liberal white institution too. That definition is very particular to UCT, Wits and Natal and defines the systems." This WASP culture...White Anglo-Saxon... I don't remember what the P stands for. But it's that very 'polite' way of dealing with people. 'Posh' p stands for posh. I don't relate to it. It is absolutely, completely white. And Patriarchal.*
>
> (Source: Interview #4)

Neither of the two respondents feels the dominant culture of the institution is one they can identify with. In the statement above Nomathemba states rather emphatically that she does not relate to it and Sipho says,

...it's because they think it's an English institution so anybody who is not white or an Englishman or person is a stranger.

(Source: Interview #3)

He feels that the institution is welcoming only to people who are specifically white or English and outsiders experience it as hostile and intimidating. He said,

The racial issue becomes a factor in the context of the history of the country. Where white was right and might and all that... it is intimidating.

(Source: Interview #3)

Nomathemba highlights the distinction between her home and work worlds when she describes the institutional culture as 'alien'. She says,

That's how I've experienced an alien institutional culture. Alien in the sense that it is certainly not the culture that I grew up in .The ways of interacting with people are different and the way people interact with me.

(Source: Interview #4)

She says "the frames of reference are different". In the quote below she articulates hers position. "Insider talk" by her colleagues serves to highlight this distinction as she cannot share in their interests. She said,

People do little things like talk about golf when they know you are black and all you know is Kaiser chiefs... the frames of reference are different. So when they speak Mozart I speak about something else that's more relevant to my culture.

(Source: Interview #4)

She indicates that in her work world she is unable to interact socially with her colleagues most of whom are white men. Because of her African identity and very different interests, she finds her work world impenetrable. She said:

You watch others interact with each other at a level where you would also like to interact with your colleagues. But you know that to insert yourself into the white boys club is very hard.

(Source: Interview #4)

So different does she find the two worlds that she feels she cannot bring them together. The result is a conscious effort to try not to mix the two worlds together. The quote below confirms that she perceives her home and work worlds as different and finds it easier to keep them separate:

There can never be tensions between work and home simply because I separate them, which is not something I've always done, but I do it here. Because that's the way it is here.

(Source: Interview #4)

Her answer suggests that this is a dynamic she only experienced once she came to the University. Further probing led her to elaborate,

Why I try to keep those separate – When I say I remove those two from each other it also means that I never bring my husband to work functions. He doesn't want to come here because this is not an environment he can relate to. ,I however attend his work functions because he works for a black firm.

(Source: Interview #4)

Sipho also indicates that his home world has different values from his work-world. He sees the two worlds as distinctly different, stating that his 'African values' are 'just a way of doing things differently'.

*I don't think I have to change [*once in the university*] because there is nothing queer about African values and my values in life. It's just a way of doing things differently.*

(Source: Interview #3)

Borders Resisted

Both respondents strongly feel they cannot identify with the values propagated by the Eurocentric culture of the institution. Conflicts between their own values and those of the institution are acute and hence they have resisted crossing sociocultural borders. Often values could not be reconciled, as shown by Sipho, who gives an example of a situation where values are different. He perceives his own values as being seen as 'queer', and argues that he should not have to change his values to fit into the institution. That he says, 'I don't think I have to change...' shows his resistance to the organisational culture. He said,

> *I don't think I have to change because there is nothing queer about African values and my values and life. It's just a way of doing things differently. Just the whites here. If you don't look at a person in the eyes when you talking to him/her you are unreliable, dishonest and so on. Whereas it is the opposite in the African culture.*
>
> (Source: Interview #3)

The two respondents (as did most of the others) felt that the organisational culture was being imposed upon them and that they were under pressure to conform, Sipho gives the following illustration:

> *What I've noticed is that when you go to these meetings is that they will all call each other by their first names, and not ask whether you comfortable being called by your first name and again that's not respecting your values. Whereas it is the opposite in the African culture. I feel all those kinds of things here. They want to impose their way of doing things.*
>
> (Source: Interview #3)

While the illustration is seemingly minor, his colleagues call him by is first name is not the issue. What is important to Sipho is that no one is concerned to find out if he is comfortable with some of the organisation's values. It's taken for granted that the way of doing things is universal.

Nomathemba concurs. She says, "...fight the good fight." This reference to fighting shows a measure of resistance on her part. Those that don't fight or rather, are overwhelmed, start to tolerate the system and to conform. In her opinion to conform is to "lose ones soul" and failure to conform often results in one having to leave the institution. She said,

> *However also fight the good fight. As you fight... in terms of your political assertions and your social assertion. You do that. I suspect though that sometimes it becomes too much. That some of us just flow with it without creating waves. I suspect that that happens... Because when you've lost your soul you've lost your values. But for most people they bring in their values and they insert them into the system therefore creating waves. They don't last of course. The system is always bigger than them. Which is another very interesting characteristic of a liberal institution. But unfortunately for the blacks there are not enough to create enough turbulence. And the exit rate is very high.*
>
> (Source: Interview #4)

Responses suggest that while respondents felt alienated, they also felt patronized and persecuted by this culture. Nomathemba and Sipho were robust in articulating their position.

Sipho illustrates,

It's patronizing and it's always interesting if you sitting in a chair they will fill all the other chairs. The only person who will come sit next to you is the late comer who has no where else to sit.

(Source: Interview #3)

While some responses suggest that alienation results as a by-product of certain attitudes that whites have towards black Africans, Sipho and Nomathemba's responses demonstrate that they perceive a deliberate and conscious action to alienate on the part of their white colleagues. Sipho is alienated in a somewhat obvious manner where no one will sit next to him voluntarily, Nomathemba describes a similar position where she is alienated through conversation about her that she cannot share in. She too indicates that she finds the institutional culture patronising. She says:

By nature liberalism is about patronizing and patriarchal systems and sustaining those. And so people do little things like talk about golf when they know that you are black and all you know is Kaiser Chiefs...thus you are excluded from that discussion.

(Source: Interview #4)

Nomathemba's and Sipho's responses show that these feelings of alienation are psychosocial borders they are faced with and are experienced as a result of sociocultural borders. Nomathemba gives another illustration further emphasising her position:

...when I first came, which I attend because I am special assistant I attend all these executive meetings. All of the white males stood up.... It made me feel conspicuous. Conspicuous that I was late, conspicuous that I was different... I was told that it's a sign of respect... I heard that it's a neoliberal form of respect; in fact it has a long history in the English tradition. And I said why are you doing it? The only problem with this particular form of tradition is that it doesn't carry into the other aspects of my job life but I don't feel this respect in other ways and therefore I find it offensive and patronizing and

for me it will always means there is an affirmation that you see me as inferior...

(Source: Interview #4)

Nomathemba's quote above shows that she encounters numerous psychosocial and sociocultural borders. She is made to feel "different". She is offended and patronized by institutional cultural practices that undermine her because, in her view, the respect given to her in one context is not carried "into other aspects of [her] job life".

Nomathemba indicates however that she has challenged the imposition of the Eurocentric culture in various ways. She describes acts of doing work tasks differently from the way they had normally were done, in direct conflict with what was expected of her.

> *... I've come in and asked why things are done in a certain way. And where I've not received sensible answers I've gone on and changed them.*
>
> (Source: Interview #4)

Nomathemba went on to describe a specific incident where she did indeed use her discretion when her colleagues had failed to provide her with what she felt what would be an adequate answer to why she was not supposed to complete a task a certain way. In this instance her attempt to get a guest speaker for a function she was frustrated by the fact that protocol demanded that she write a letter of invitation and wait for a response. Upon enquiring why she could not just pick up the phone and speak to this person she was told that is not how things were done in the department and it was rude. She failed to understand how it could be rude, but nonetheless followed procedures and wrote another letter. A few days before the crucial event she, in a fit of frustration, picked up the phone and called the individual who as it turned out had not received any of the letters as he had been away. He was happy to hear from her and accepted the honour of attending the function. She said that although she had achieved the objective, her seniors frowned on her for going against the rules and doing things "her own way".

Nomathemba and Sipho both are of the opinion, however, that challenging the system causes tension and there are psychological costs. Nomathemba believes people who challenge the system "create waves", and with insufficient sense of support they are not likely to stay long at the university. She said,

> *But for most people that bring their values and they try and insert them into the system thereby creating waves. They don't last of course... Unfortunately there are not enough black people to create enough turbulence.*
>
> (Source: Interview #4)

Sipho concurs and gives an example of a situation when he challenged the way things were done and says of his efforts:

> *If I had my way I would be kicking them out [under performing black professionals]. I tried to do that in the past but it caused serious tensions here. It was as if they [my white colleagues] were saying, who are you a black person (to try and kick these people out), when we are trying to look for black people.*
>
> (Source: Interview #3)

While five out of the six respondents felt to varying degrees that they did not identify with the work culture as they moved between the different worlds. Nomathemba and Sipho are extreme cases in that they feel totally alienated and isolated at work.

Nomathemba feels that there is no sense of ownership. She experiences the university environment as an outsider, someone in foreign space and yet it is within her own country. She feels that like everything South African she ought to identify with it. When she speaks of South Africa she refers to it as "*my* country", emphasising "*my*" and then

goes on to speak of the institution as "an island in a home that's mine".

> *It's like you are in the USA, like a foreigner, like an alien. So an American, born and bred, challenges you, and you feel pushed into a corner to go... This place looks like an island in a home that I define as mine. Because all this country, I define as MY country, as my background. But I get into the university and I feel alienated in the environment... I feel that this does not belong to me. And that feeling is perpetuated by the culture of this institution, which is devised in that way...*
>
> (Source: Interview #4)

Both Nomathemba and Sipho said their white colleagues make them feel like they are invading their 'white space'. Nomathemba says,

> *...they talk as if we're aliens, outsiders ...and they talk about a nuisance. Somebody who is needy. Someone with disadvantage... And every time you question me as a black person, I start to think; of course this is your uncle's place, your backyard. You are more entitled to be here than me. And I become defensive. That's why black people don't stay...*
>
> (Source: Interview #4)

Sipho concurred by articulating his perception that the institution employed black people prior to 1990 in order to project an image of liberalism as a contribution toward the anti-apartheid movement. Since 1990 there is no longer any obligation toward black.

> *They also have this attitude since 1990 that Mandela is out, we protected you from the Boers so what do you still want here. That kind of attitude, get out of our space... you have got your freedom now.*
>
> (Source: Interview #3)

Unlike the other four respondents who had relatively good relationships with their

colleagues at work both Nomathemba and Sipho do not describe their relationships in a positive light. Nomathemba has a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward her relationships with her white colleagues. She is cautious in her relationships with her colleagues and distrusts them. She says:

> *Careful, my relationships with people at THE UNIVERSITY are careful. Which means I at all times have to put forward a façade of professionalism... careful because I know my every move is being watched, I've been told that my every move is being watched actually.*
>
> (Source: Interview #4)

Sipho states quite bluntly that he does not like one of his white colleagues.

> *[there is] one white colleague whom I don't like...he is a typical white who grew up in the farm with these farm boys and farm girls. He will choose one staff member, who is stupid and use that one against the others. You know those kinds of stupid games which are outdated.*
>
> ((Source: Interview #3)

Sipho, like Nomathemba, also displays a lack of trust in his white colleague. When asked about his other colleagues and superiors he does not directly work with but meets in meetings he says does not speak to them. He carries work with him so that he concentrates on his work instead of engaging in social conversation. This is form of withdrawal maybe a strategy that he adopts to cope with his isolation when his colleague are 'talking their own things'. Yet it is a strategy that imposes even more psychosocial borders, as it serves to isolate him further.

> *When they are talking their own things, I don't even eat their sandwiches. I go there with a piece of work so that during breaks when they are enjoying themselves I continue with my work.*

(Source:Interview #3)

Nomathemba is the youngest of the respondents and the only one out of the six who does not play a mentoring role and in fact argued that black managers needed a support structure of some sort. Sipho said the relationships with black colleagues "from his era" were good as they understood each other. He had a mentoring role with his younger black colleagues, although he thought that "*the young ones*" believed they could be more "*defiant to the powers that be*" than those "from his era". (Source:Interview # 3) One wonders whether he is being cynical or whether part of him longs to share their idealism.

Nomathemba seems experience "race" and gender borders. She says:

> *I'm dealing with perceptions of my capabilities. Preconceptions of what my capabilities should be. I'm dealing with that and that's a challenge. I am a black woman and a married woman and with any of those things there are perceptions that people have. It's a challenge that is more pronounced at [here], precisely because it's a historically white institution and a liberal white institution too. That definition is particular to UCT, Wits and Natal. And it defines the systems. And the perceptions of black women.... Things are not distinct. They happen simultaneously. So as you perform tasks you also say something about yourself as a black manager.*
>
> (Source: Interview # 4)

Unlike the other respondents who accommodate the values of the dominant organisational culture as they negotiate their identity, Nomathemba and Sipho seem to have resisted and rejected the organisational culture. Nomathemba view of conformity as

"selling one's soul" reveal a form of resistance and rejection of the dominant white culture.

> *You watch others interact with each other at a level where you would also like to interact with your colleagues. But you know that to insert yourself into the white boys club is very hard. It might mean selling your soul as well.*
>
> (Source:Interview #4)

Resistance as a form of defence takes different forms.

Although Sipho claims to be indifferent to the institutional climate, he has clearly adopted a defensive strategy to protect himself from a hostile climate. He said,

> *I'm indifferent. As I said before frankly I don't care for the system. I am indifferent. I get on with my life. I am able to pretend the system does not exist and enjoy my life... it's like wearing a vest which is close to your body making you warm. And if the jacket surrounding you is not good enough, is not making you warm at least there is something else that is holding you together. So I'm surrounded by that kind of happiness as a person and the rest of the institution can go to hell.*
>
> (Source:Interview #3)

On the whole Nomathemba regularly challenges what she does like at work, but at times she seems to strategically withdraw to protect herself from 'hurt and rejection'. She says,

> *I interact with you on the basis of work and performance related issues. And I don't interact with you on any other level. It may not be the most effect strategy but it's the most protecting strategy. It protects me from hurt, from rejection, from all these things. And in all of my African arrogance, I can shut you out of that space... and so instead of dealing with certain issues you remove yourself and you shut them off and you work.*
>
> (Source:Interview #4)

These strategies are an angry reaction to a hostile and isolative system as can be seen

from the responses of Sipho and Nomathemba. In such cases, adaptation becomes a difficult and troubled experience. Nomathemba indicates during an informal conversation after the interview that she is, in fact, so unhappy that she is looking for another job, and should an opportunity to leave the institution present itself she would not hesitate to leave. Where coping strategies have involved rationales for resisting and rejecting the dominant culture of the workplace, borders become impenetrable as is evidenced by the experiences of Nomathemba and Sipho.

The findings begin to give us an insight into the diverse ways black African managers navigate borders and negotiate identury in a Eurocentric institution.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Now we turn to the questions we posed at the outset of the study and discuss them in the light of our findings, our theoretical framework and other pertinent literature. We explore the effects of the experiences of working at a university dominated by Eurocentrism on the selves of black African managers. By examining the borders (and boundaries) they encounter and the ways they navigate these borders, as they move between home and work, we learn about how they negotiate identity in the workplace.

To use the language of Casey (1995) we are able to show that the managers exhibit a number of "clustered self strategies", which fall into several broad profiles. Despite overlaps in the displayed strategies, there is a discernible set of features that enables the analytical profiling of these strategies. The profiles, however, are not static and the respondents may adopt one set of self strategies for a period of time, and later adopt another.

Some General Characteristics

The general characteristics which have emerged include i) the experience of the institutional culture as being Eurocentric, ii) feeling alienated, as well as iii) feeling under pressure to conform.

Experience of the institution as Eurocentric:

Respondents perceive the environment as not only Eurocentric, but as the preserve of the white male. This echoes Steyn and Van Zyl's (2003) study of the institutional culture at University of the Witwatersrand. Their research showed that in this English-speaking university, the institutional culture was experienced by black individuals as being characterised by 'whiteness' and 'patriarchy'. A similar study conducted in 2001 by Steyn and Van Zyl (ibid) at the University of Cape Town, this time amongst students, not faculty, revealed that students held similar views of the university. It too was characterised by a white male (upper) middle-class Eurocentric worldview. While in our study all the respondents felt that the institution was definitely 'white', only one, Nomathemba, mentioned explicitly the 'maleness' of the institutional culture, as she experienced it. This omission could be because the other respondents are male, or because the patriarchal nature of the university was tacit in their definitions and understandings of the institutional culture. Certainly Eric hints at this when he says that the culture is hostile to "outsiders". He means by this black people and women.

What then are the implications for identity? The experience of the institutional culture as Eurocentric would not have as significant an impact on the identity of an individual whose home orientation was similar to that of the institution. Eric is an example of such an individual. He explains that both he and his family have been westernised to a point that he does not feel out of place at the university, and experiences little to challenge his identity, hence his transition between worlds is smooth. On the other hand, the

Eurocentrism of the institutional culture could have a significant impact on those individuals who do not identify with this culture. If an individual's orientation is significantly different, then a major part of their existential reality is denied, i.e. their African identity is disregarded and marginalised in the Eurocentric space of the workplace.

Alienation

To a greater or lesser degree black African managers experience the institutional culture as alienating. With reference to alienation, Casey (1995 75) says "the creative, generative, essentially human nature ... in which humans might potentially become most fully themselves is contradicted and destroyed by the process of individual labour...". Although none of the respondents use the word 'marginal', this aspect is tacit in their experience of alienation arising from the institutional culture. Only Eric came across as not having experienced this aspect of the culture. The other respondents experienced the culture as marginalised people, sometimes alienated through the action of the colleagues, at other times through cultural practices they did not understand. Watts (1985), Qunta (1995), Luhabe (2002), and Steyn and Van Zyl (2003) all write about experiences of alienation among black African professionals working in white organisations in South Africa.

Pressure to conform

Casey refers to the "colonizing corporation" (1995:163) and the "colonised self" (ibid: 139). Corporate colonization seeks to pattern the self into the "ideal type" that offers

minimal resistance to the institutional culture and ultimately conforms. Whether or not they conformed, all the respondents expressed their concern, that they felt the pressure to conform. Cetshwayo and Lindah appear to resist conforming to the dominant culture. Eric on the other hand, whether consciously of unconsciously, conforms with relative ease since the institutional culture is an extension of his home culture. Dumisani conforms by adopting a strategy Phelan *et al.* (1998:66) call "situational adaptation". Sipho and Nomathemba on the other hand, also felt the pressure to conform, but chose to resist.

Though these commonalities exist this should be construed as a homogenous group of black managers. Our profiles present the different ways in which individuals negotiate identity, and thereby dispel the portrayal of black managers as homogenous.

We now turn to a discussion of the profiles and strategies which reveal something of the ways in which black African managers negotiate identity in the university.

Profile 1: Congruent Worlds/ Smooth Transitions

Black African managers in this profile move between home and work with relative ease and there are little or no psychological costs. Their experiences at work are shaped by the congruence that exists between the home and work worlds. As the black middle class

grows and managers are drawn from second generation and third generation middle class black families we expect to find an increasing number of black African managers fitting this profile. Phelan *et al.* (1998, 184) are quick to point out that the individuals in this profile do not necessarily act exactly the same way across boundaries, i.e. in the workplace as they do in the home, but rather the commonalities override the differences. "Family values include conformity to white, middle- to upper-middle-class standards of behaviour" (ibid.).

Eric clearly displayed his and his family's subscription to "Western" values. His relatively Westernised world view is entrenched such that secondary socialisation in the workplace builds upon internalised reality of primary socialisation. This facilitates his smooth transition from home into the world of work. He has experienced re-socialisation and the subjective reality in his adult home world is sufficiently congruent with that of the workplace even though it is different from that in which he grew up. Eric also fits Casey's description of the colluded self to a certain extent. We are reluctant to use the term "colluded self" and feel "conformity" is a better word. Casey's concept of the colluded self refers to individuals who experience little discontinuity between the home and work worlds. These individuals easily conform to Western ways of doing things. Eric has had no problems advancing rapidly in the institution because of his ability to subscribe to the dominant Protestant Work Ethic i.e. working hard, long hours with little time spent with his family.

However, it is possible that some individuals in this profile experience marginal

situations. According Berger and Luckmann (1966, 162) when individuals feel marginalised in certain situations which are not a part of their everyday life, they are likely to bracket them. This is what happens in Eric's case. Despite the congruency there is an isolated incident that presents itself as a race border. He recounts an early experience when he first arrived at the institution as is mistaken for either being a student or a cleaner. What is important is the way in which he deals with this incident. His sense of self has been challenged as the experience of racism and social exclusion contradicts his view of the workplace as an extension of his home world. The incident reveals his desire to conform. Through that moment he is made to feel like he does not belong, but as a part of his reality construction he '"brackets" and "contains" this experience as it conflicts with his subjective reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966). In so doing he distances himself from this event and maintains his subjective reality. He does not allow the event to threaten his sense of self and who he is. During the interview he maintains that he sees himself as an insider; he has demonstrated that he and his family have embraced a Western model. To carry on believing in this reality he has to deal with this racist experience this way. That Eric deals with this incident by bracketing it and pushing it to the back of his mind and immersing himself in his work is revealing, because on a general level this is how people deal with conflicting experiences that challenge their subjective reality. Bracketing is about detaching oneself from certain experiences.

Of course if bracketing were no longer possible because the incidents of racism were more frequent then the individual managers' world of everyday life and identity as an insider would be challenged.

Different worlds

Where the Eurocentric culture of the university is significantly different from that of their home world, respondents fall into the 'Different worlds' type. The problem of consistency or congruency arises when individuals are faced with a reality in the work world that maybe different from an established subjective reality. The lack of congruence of their worlds may not necessarily pose a challenge, but it will influence identity negotiation to varying degrees.

Profile II: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings Managed

In this profile, despite the perception of different worlds borders are often managed with relative ease. Individuals encounter borders but they attempt to manage these borders and build bridges between the worlds. Though individuals feel the pressure to conform to the institutional culture they may not necessarily do so. Two dominant strategies emerge in this profile: one is "plugging in" (De Wet, 2000: 36) and the other is "adapting situationally" (Phelan *et al.*, 1998: 17).

In this study "plugging in" involves the manager selecting and integrating or plugging in an element of his/her home culture into the institutional culture thereby Africanising that aspect of the workplace culture. An example would be Cetshwayo's replacing hierarchical decision-making with consensus decision-making. In so doing his style of decision-making at work reflects the style at home. This can be seen as a small-scale

attempt at Africanisation of the workplace.

"Adapting situationally" means that an individual conforms to norms of the organisation but reverts to the norms of the home world once outside the organisation. Casey (1995: 163) talks about "corporate colonisation of the self". This occurs when individuals consciously or unconsciously go along with "corporate colonisation" (Casey, 1995: 164) and conform, behaving as the organisation demands of them. Dumisani, in particular, adapts situationally. This is strategy is followed when an individual conforms to mainstream patterns of interaction of the dominant culture when they are in the minority (Phelan *et al.*, 1993: 65). Dumisani mentions that he leaves his life at home in the township and has to be a different person at work, sometimes, tolerating things he normally would not. In another study by De Wet (2000: 236) a respondent said, " I find myself taking off the traditional me and leaving it behind whenever I enter the gates and picking it up and putting it on whenever I walk out through the gates after work. I go home and I am myself".

It is the same way that Dumisani employs a similar strategy as he tries to keep his worlds apart. Unlike Cetshwayo who resists pressure to conform by adopting the "plug in model", Dumisani chooses the route of least resistance and conforms to the dominant culture of the university.

Qunta (1995: 44) argues that "for Africans and other blacks people working in a white corporate environment requires as much of a psychological adjustment as it does for

whites, if not more." She goes on to argue that white people tend to be quite vocal with their cynicism about a black government yet black people are expected to interact with their white colleagues without any resentment and "to suppress their feelings and get on with the task of fitting in" (ibid: 45). While Cetshwayo and Dumisani do not fall in the extreme category they do experience some distress over certain aspects of the work world and the chief cause of this is having to be accommodating in the workplace whilst receiving little or no recognition for the sacrifices they make. Individuals in this profile internalize the new reality with minimal discomfort yet their transitions are, however, not without psychosocial costs; for example Cetshwayo and Dumisani pointed out that they felt they had to be accommodating and that black people in general bore the 'cultural burden'.

Phelan *et al.* (1998: 187) argue that individuals in this profile are sometimes forced to deny fundamental aspects of their personal and ethnic identities. In a lot of ways this is indicative of the conflicts that individuals in this profile might feel between the cultures of the different worlds. Cetshwayo gives an example of such a situation when he says, one is often expected to adopt the dominant culture of the organization and act with competitive aggression, something he finds *"ridiculous"*. Conforming and accommodating are described by Phelan et al (1993: 65) as "internalized oppression" when one feels pressured to engage in a certain type of behaviour. Berger and Luckmann (1966) warn of this when they discuss how one's subjective reality may be threatened by being the marginal situation of the human experience that cannot be entirely bracketed into what one experiences as normal "everyday" activity.

De Wet (forthcoming) asks, "In situations where the worlds are different and secondary socialisation seeks to radically transform subjective reality (Berger and Luckmann (1966: 161): How are black managers' subjective realities maintained or transformed?" Reality construction is complex in this situation as cultural and social conflicts become a web of contrasting demands, in extreme cases this would lead to rejection of one's identity or certain aspects of it; an event that could potentially lead to high levels of psychological and emotional costs. In this case the individual would no longer be a suitable match for this profile and would then fall in Profile III where individuals find border crossing difficult.

Profile III: Different Worlds/ Border Crossings difficult

As in Profile II individuals come from distinct worlds but in this case transitions are more difficult to manage. While individuals may excel in the workplace or attempt to "plug in" or integrate aspects of their home culture into the work place, the transitions are challenging and the psychic costs are great. These range from anxiety and stress to depression and burnout. Phelan *et al.* (1993) argue that while the individuals may be showing a capacity to succeed, they are always on the brink of withdrawal; and the conditions of the work environment often mean the difference between staying on and resigning. Conditions may include low expectations by colleagues and pessimism about the individual's abilities. Watts (1985) argues that stress is also provoked by status inconsistencies when a black manager encounters lower status assignment in the work

world than in the home world.

Lindah is an individual who eventually experiences burnout and leaves the institution. She seems to fit into Profile II, indicating that she was not afraid to insert her own cultural values into her work world. However she found the transitions challenging and revealed in her interview her authority is second-guessed because she is a black woman and how her credibility is always on the line as other black people see her as a traitor when they perceive her to be taking the white people's side; white people on the other hand, are hostile as they think she is trying to Africanise the work place when they perceive her to be taking the black people's side. Despite these issues she emphasizes that this does not stop her doing her job well. This, Phelan *et al.* (1998, 187) describe as "teetering between involvement and disengagement" and Lindah is an example of an extreme case as her frustrations eventually force her withdrawal from the institution. She shows evidence of trying to maintain her subjective reality but her own construction of self in the workplace is threatened by her colleagues; the white colleagues say she is pro-black while her black colleagues call her a sell-out. She feels her credibility is always on the line and she attempts to bracket incidents by paying little attention to them and asserting her authority instead. The cumulative effects of these psychic costs wear her down and she resigns. Caver and Livers (2002: 78) strongly argue that black managers operate within a miasma containing a number of "things that happen" to them and these "things" have a "cumulative effect that wears one down".

While stress and burnout are products of what Phelan et al. (1993: 74) highlight as the

friction and discomfort during the negotiation of identity, the resignation however need not be seen as defeat. It is a strategy for self preservation where she tries to maintain and protect her "self" by leaving the university.

Profile IV: Different worlds/ Borders Resisted

Black African managers in this profile are more likely than those in other profiles to interpret overt and covert attempts to get their values attitudes and general orientation to correspond with those promoted by the institution as a process of institutional "colonisation of the self" (Casey, 1995: 138). Casey (1995: 139) goes on to say,

> "Specific traits and attitudes that are useful to the work are stimulated and rewarded. Traits and attitudes that are unnecessary or that impede the process of the workplace, and therefore of production, are thwarted and suppressed. Individuals who display more of these undesired features tend to experience higher degrees of intra-psychic conflict, discomfort and alienation than those more disposed to, or more willing to comply with a congruent fit with the corporation's desired character type."

Madi (1997; 19) argues that black managers find themselves at odds with the reality of the Eurocentric organisations. He says, "The message to the black manager is: 'If you want to be one of us you must share our values.'" (ibid.). Berger and Luckmann (1966) would argue that it is in situations such as these where the individual experiences marginal situations that account for the resistance that some individuals display toward a certain reality. In response to marginal situations individuals tend to adopt defence mechanisms to protect their identities. It is through acts of resistance that Nomathemba and Sipho are engaging in identity negotiation. Both consciously employ rationalisations

with which to protect their subjective realities from transformation and thereby protect their 'selves'. Nomathemba refuses to 'share' in the institutions values and argues that to conform to the Eurocentric culture is like *"selling one's soul"*. This is revealing at it shows a strong sense of identity rooted in her home culture, an identity that Sipho shares. They have a strong sense of home identity and in an attempt to protect the integrity of the "home" self, as well as maintaining the self; they resist the borders they encounter in the workplace. They refuse to devalue their home identities and collude with the institution and consequently find different ways to passively or actively resist the organisational culture. Attempts to embrace the institutional culture would produce stress and anxiety such that individuals would rather gravitate away from circumstances that exacerbate their discomfort; so either they choose not to commit themselves to the culture of the work place or actively seek opportunities to resist it. As Phelan *et al.* (1993; 1998) argue this only intensifies their isolation from the organisational culture and their colleagues. In addition to stress and anxiety there is also the disconnectedness that individuals feel in relation to the institution.

Sipho and Nomathemba displayed signs of resistance to the dominant culture of the work place. Both respondents describe themselves as alienated, in varying degrees, either by Eurocentric customs or by their colleagues. Nomathemba, for example, feels alienated by her colleagues talking about their weekend golf, a sport she knows nothing about. Sipho talked about going to meetings where no-one would sit next to him unless there was no other seat left in the room. While such examples may seem petty, they reveal something about how individuals relate to the institution and often it is the cumulative effect of these seemingly small experiences that results in individuals' response strategies.

Both Nomathemba and Sipho seem to adopt strategies of self defence and self protection. Casey (1995; 164) describes these strategies as being characterised by small scale resistances, retreats, rationalisations and blockages. Defensive selves often tend to criticise the institution as well as their seniors and colleagues; and individuals often report bad experiences and disrespect to their self-worth and abilities, which are evident in the interviews with Sipho and Nomathemba, both of whom adopt this strategy in different ways. For example, Nomathemba feels that her colleagues undermine her competencies because she is black and a woman, Sipho feels that his colleague looks down upon black people.

Casey (1995) would argue however that, while both adopt rationalities for protection, Sipho would be a more introverted low key defensive and Nomathemba would be a more resistant defensive. The resistant defensive would display the same characteristics as the introverted but the difference is that, unlike introverted defensives that tend to withdraw and engage in forms of passive resistance, resistant defensives will speak out. Nomathemba, a resistant defensive tends to govern her relationships with caution and questions norms and practices she does not understand. Sipho on the other hand as an introverted defensive self tends to avoid confrontations, and generally keeps to himself and his work. He 'resists' for example, relationships with his white colleagues whom he does not like through, avoidance, preferring instead to take work to meetings so that he does not have to interact with anyone.;

Berger and Luckmann (1966) point out that sometimes individuals experience competing

definitions of reality. Individuals' subjective reality is threatened by secondary socialisation in the work world and the situation accounts for the resistance they display toward the reality of the workplace which threatens to superimpose their subjective reality. They strive to confront the reality they encounter, that is not compatible with their own perception of self. For Nomathemba, the institutional culture is not consistent with how she perceives herself. On the whole she does not share the fundamental values promoted by the university's institutional culture. The behaviour of her white male colleagues made her feel conspicuous as a black person and as a woman, an outsider. She feels subtly undermined by some of her colleagues because she did not belong to what was an "old boys" network. Resistance in her case mainly takes the form of openly challenging her colleagues, in particular her white male colleagues.

Rationalisations for protection of self, on the other hand, may not be confrontational, but rather passive and introverted. Sipho gives indications of being an introverted self. He keeps to himself, seeking to protect his identity by complete detachment from the institution. While he displays signs of being an introverted defensive, on another level, what he is doing could also be a subtle form of passive resistance or low intensity non-conformity. This takes the form of non-compliance or disengaging from the system as he seems to detach himself from the reality of his work world. He goes to meetings, but does not talk to his colleagues there, and does not partake in the refreshments that are provided referring to them as '*their food*'.

Once again we see a reaction of the type of experience that Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to as the marginal situation. The strategy goes beyond "bracketing" and "containing" the experiences to using withdrawal or detachment as a means of reality

maintenance. Sipho clearly chooses to detach himself. He says he gets on with his life, doing only what he is expected to do, while pretending that the system does not exist. He says it is like *"wearing a vest which is close to your body making you warm. And if the jacket surrounding you is not good enough, is not making you warm at least there is something else that is holding you together"*. He withdraws, encases himself in a suit of protective armour and has minimal engagement with the institution to protect his identity which is grounded in his home orientation.

Casey (1995: 175) talks of the capitulated self who is worn out as a result of the continual resistance as a defensive self. These individuals, either reluctantly or for pragmatic reasons, start to capitulate. Casey describes this as involving surrendering to the colonisation of self by the organisation. Over time capitulated selves become colluded selves (Casey, 1995; 164). Where the institution is unable to colonise the self, at best, an individual can get by under this profile, as in the case of Sipho, who has been with the University since 1987. At worst the individual may experience his/her self in such a state of alienation, lacking a sense of belonging that s/he will leave the institution, as in the case of Nomathemba, who indicated that she was looking for another job.

Organisational transformation

Organisational transformation is not our primary concern here but a discussion of black African managers and their experiences cannot avoid the issue. The above findings provide some clues for transformation.

Transformation in most organisations is end-results oriented rather than being process-

oriented. While obtaining the right "numbers" is important transformation transcends the "numbers game" and the aim of this study is to contribute to organisational transformation by showing that the way people are dealing with issues is part of a process of transforming the environment. Sachs (1996; 153-154) says, "The quicker the hard decision makers in management are representative of the demographics of South Africa, the better for business." Sachs' comment about big business applies equally to tertiary institutions. Sachs is probably right, white male management can hardly be expected to steer transformation that is meant to undermine their power position. Does the transformation committee in the university put all its resources and energies into first changing the demographics of management? Does it wait the university to employ a critical mass of black African and women managers before real transformation will come about?

People like Qunta (1995) and Luhabe (2002) argue that because the employment equity procress is slow and changing organisational cultures needs time and we cannot wait for the numbers to change before we can see transformation take place. We ought to adopt a multi-pronged strategy which targets changing the demographics and working with what is presently available. The important point is not to see transformation processes as only getting the right numbers but also as listening to the voices of those who are already in those positions.

Often the key people that oversee the transformation process are "outside experts" (Qunta, 1995; Luhabe, 2002) who dictate what must happen. Very little emphasis is put on process and how it can be facilitated to promote transformation and very few take into account the subjective voice of black manager. Currently, much of the focus is on getting

the right numbers. The process is just as important. The aim of this study is to show how listening to their voices can inform the transformation process.

While some of the adaptation strategies employed by these managers can be seen as resistance, this does not necessarily have to be seen as negative. As Lindah and Nomathemba keep stressing that they find themselves 'fighting', this can be seen as fighting a battle to transform. It is important that managers buy into the organisational culture to be identify with it and by displaying resistance they may influence positive change in the organization thereby contributing to transformation. Organisations create opportunities for productive fulfilling work.

All the respondents except Eric did not have a sense of belonging in the organisational culture which they described as either alien or foreign. Cetshwayo and to a certain extent Lindah made overt attempts to Africanise aspects of the workplace. This plugging in of elements of their own values may be unconscious hence it would be useful to bring to awareness was otherwise unconscious. This is evidence of a semi-conscious process of transformation of small-scale Africanisation taking place. Mbigi (1992), Khoza (1993) Lessem (1993) and others would argue for a model of "African Management" which is a culture specific management approach espousing African values. We, however, agree with Thomas and Schonken (1997: 76) who argue that rather than totally sweep Western ways of management aside with their Eurocentric orientation find ways to integrate the too cultures. This is something that some black managers have begun to do as evidenced by Cetshwayo who has inserted some of his own values.

All of the respondents indicated that there was little in terms of support systems for black managers. In fact it was something that Nomathemba and Lindah discussed at length as they talk about 'alienation' and feeling alone. This raises questions about how to draw people like Nomathemba, Lindah and Sipho into the transformation process. Maybe if drawn together with people like Cetshwayo creating networks that can act as support systems, transformation can be sold to people like Sipho who have lost hope. Qunta (1995; 106) suggests that black professionals draw support from other black colleagues who are probably experiencing the same issues and are thus in a better position to share strategies and experiences.

Stress and burnout are problems that apply to all staff members but for black managers the issues that lead to stress and burnout often revolve around being black in a white organisation. Burn out is likely to be more of a problem for cultural resistors who resist the institution's attempt to colonise self. Lindah provides us with insights into how working conditions can impact on an individual's psychological health. Eric, Cetshwayo and Nomathemba talked about how black professionals in general who leave institutions are seen as doing so in search of more money and greener pastures. This is not so they argue and Lindah's experiences of this are evidence of this fact. Black people often leave the organisation because they become unhappy, stressed or burnout in the Eurocentric organisation. Again this highlights the importance of taking into account the transformation process. Merely employing black people for the right statistics is not enough. More importantly are there resources in place to enable their transitions to be smoother? In the end when the individuals resign from the organisation its not only costs

the individual but also the company.

All of the respondents view the institution as Eurocentric and white dominated. Respondents like Lindah, Nomathemba, Sipho and Cetshwayo expressed concern over the fact that not only was the African culture not acknowledged by their white colleagues but there was little evidence of effort being made to acknowledge and engage with it.

Studies conducted at Wits and UCT to investigate the institutional culture of these universities. The Wits study revealed that the 'macro-culture' is perceived by black Africans as one which represents the "centralized position of whiteness and patriarchy and is experienced acutely by marginalized people" (Van Zyl and Steyn; 2003). The UCT Climate Survey was more quantitative yet the findings still reflect that black Africans felt that transformation was not happening fast enough. The report showed that diversity was viewed more negatively by black Africans some of whom reported having experienced racial discrimination to varying degrees. There seemed to be a general concern for the lack of diversity in the staff at UCT

Van Zyl and Steyn (2003) say: "transformation requires the courage to engage with difficult ethical and moral questions around identities- i.e. identities of not only the institution but also its stakeholders". This points to the value of our study: to raise consciousness of black manager's experiences. Taking into account the way individuals construct realities as they negotiate their identities ought to provide clues as to the direction organizational transformation ought to take to be successful.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of the study was to investigate how black African managers navigate borders (and boundaries) and negotiate identity in the workplace. Central to the conceptualisation of the study was the aspect of border crossings between home and work and the strategies for identity maintenance/ formation that went on during that process. The literature has tended to portray black African managers as a homogenous group. By allowing black managers to speak for themselves and to tell their stories our objective was to begin to show that, while there were a few commonalities, they are not a homogenous group.

While we can tentatively make conclusions challenging the homogeneity of black managers, we recognize that the most limiting factor of the research is the small sample size. As we have mentioned before, the study is posed as a small-scale study, which lays the foundation for a large-scale investigation of black African manager's experiences in the four English-speaking universities in South Africa. A large-scale study would more conclusively uncover the diversity of experiences that we can only suggest at this level after a small-scale study.

Our theoretical framework helped us to generate profiles, which reflected the clustering in the data. The profiles provided us with a typology that is based on whether or not the "worlds" are congruent and what adaptation strategies the respondents use in their transitions between worlds. The following four profiles emerged from the data:

1. Congruent Worlds/Smooth Transitions
2. Different Worlds/Border-crossings Managed
3. Different Worlds/Border-crossings Difficult
4. Different Worlds/Borders Resisted

The limited number of profiles also highlights another limitation of the study. The sample of six does not allow for the emergence of other possible profiles and we would expect that on a larger scale other profiles would appear in a larger sample.

Within the profiles that emerged we discovered further strategies for negotiating identity in the workplace. Firstly, respondents sometimes conformed to the institutional culture whereby they adopted Western norms and ways of doing things; this was more easily done in instances whereby individuals experienced minimal discontinuity between their home and work worlds. Another strategy involved the plugging in of values of the home culture into that of the institution. In this study "plugging in" involves the individual selecting and integrating or plugging in an element of his/her home culture into the institutional culture, thereby 'Africanizing' that aspect of the workplace culture. Resistance emerged as a third strategy. Individuals, like Sipho and Nomathemba who adopted this strategy, felt conforming to the workplace's Eurocentric culture devalued their home culture and their sense of self. They chose instead to passively or actively resist the discursive practices of the institution that attempt to shape their values, attitudes and kinds of orientations to fit the requirements of the institutional culture. A final strategy is to withdraw and leave the institution altogether. The variety of strategies demonstrates further diversity among black African managers.

Feedback from the participants involved in the study indicates that the fieldwork served as a means of consciousness raising, that is, it made the participants more aware of their own assumptions, values and beliefs and how their ways of seeing, being and doing interact with the institutional culture to influence their experiences in the workplace.

As most of the respondents indicated, the turnover is high for black members of staff and more often than not it has little to do with money but rather the hostile environment of Eurocentric organizations. Linked to this is the area of border crossings and psychosocial costs, which deserves further attention. Some of the strategies that emerged from the study seemed to be particularly constructive and perhaps it would help others in similar situations to know how some of their counterparts deal with the challenges they face. This is where one of the values in such a study lies. There is clearly a need to further study how black African managers construct their identities in large organisations. Despite this being small-scale study it highlights the importance of listening to the voices of black African managers and their accounts of how they negotiate identity in the workplace.

Another topic for future research is what support systems black managers draw on as they navigate white, male dominated Eurocentric organizations. Further research is also needed into whether organizations that claim to affirm African ways of seeing, being and doing retain black managers and successfully offer them a more rewarding work experience and more of a sense of belonging than organizations that are Eurocentric.

The subjective voice, embodied in recounted respondents' experiences, can be used to create an awareness not only within individuals about themselves but also amongst black

managers as group so they are able to draw lessons and learn from one another's experiences of constructive strategies.

The lessons are not limited to black Africans who are managers. Some important lessons for transformation processes in different facets of the South African society can be drawn from this example. In a country where the transformation agenda is a political driver of social and economic change, listening to the subjective voice of individuals' experiences in the post apartheid society can have huge positive implications for redistributive policy in general. For example, endeavors to remedy economic and social disadvantage in South Africa need not only be carried out in a generalized way where black Africans are seen to all experience the same challenges. Attention to diversity within the group may result in better allocation of resources.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule:

Background

This study focuses on challenges and problem-solving strategies of black managers in English-speaking historically white universities. Existing literature often refers to "the black manager", implying that black managers can fit into a single profile. I want to challenge that. Through this study I hope to be able to identify patterns and show that there is no single 'the black manager' but rather multiples profiles to which any one manager can belong. Furthermore, the way that black managers respond to challenges contributes to our understanding of organizational transformation.

Definitions for purpose of interview

- Challenge: A difficulty that requires extra effort or tests ones powers and capabilities to the full.
- Problem solving strategy: how one responds to challenges

Discussion themes

- Job description
  - What respondent's job entails.
  - Undermined?
- Relationships with colleagues
  - Relationships with white subordinates vs. white seniors

- Attitudes of white colleagues
- Preconceptions/ Perceptions of white colleagues

- Institutional culture i.e. the way things are done
  - Alienating vs integrating
- Transformation at *THE UNIVERSITY* (your subjective opinion)
  - Your subjective opinion toward transformation at *THE UNIVERSITY*
  - Your personal contribution
  - What you think are barriers toward progress
  - Recommendations as to how the process could be more fruitful
- Social aspect of your work
  - Hospitality of function attendance as Dean
  - Alienating vs integrating
- Tension between work and home (if any)
  - In terms of values and beliefs (do you ever feel that you compromise certain values)
  - Culture

Anything else you might have to add